ISSUE 45 • JUNE 1991 £1.80

ACE

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THE ULTIMATE GAMES MAGAZINE

ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT

EXCLUSIVE

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Revolutionary Multi-player Combat!

TIMEWARP!

Incredible Graphic Adventuring in Space Quest IV!

ECTS SHOW REPORT

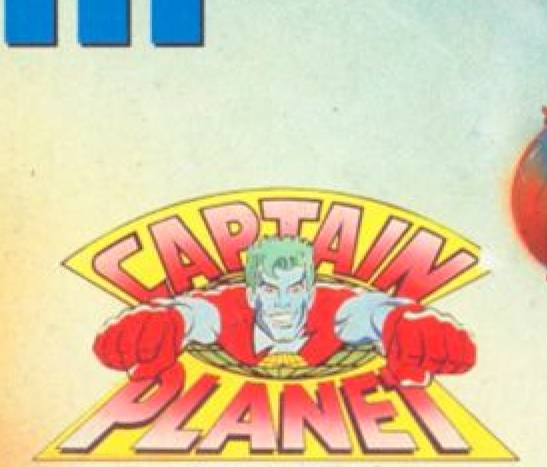
Behind the Industry's Closed Doors

MARIO

An Analysis of Perfect Gameplay

SONY ON CD

The Giant Reveals Its Plans



Clean, Green and on the Screen

PLUS:

30 Pages of Software Bargains in the Pinks!

WORLD'S FINEST REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS! INCLUDING:
GODS, SHADOW DANCER, HILL ST BLUES, DARKMAN, ELF, ALIEN STORM, MERCS, VIZ, DAS BOOT, COHORT, GAUNTLET 3, NAM + MANY MORE!

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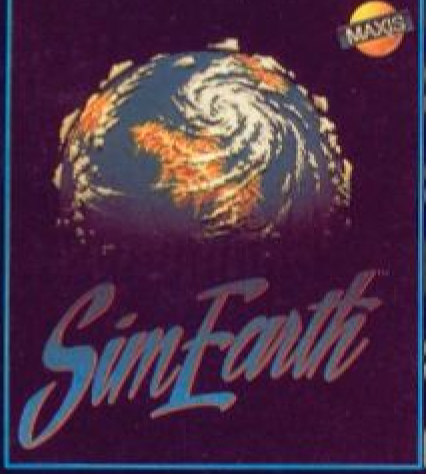
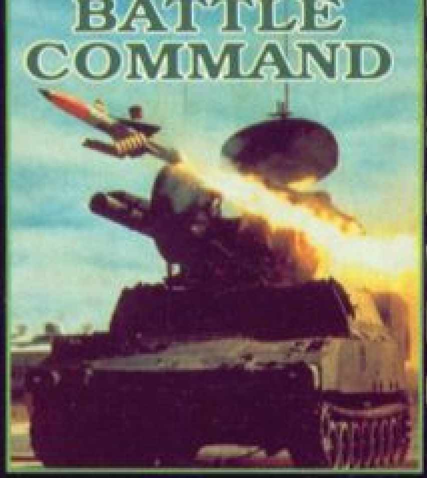


THE THINK TANK

Set in the near future, as an alternative reali Battle Command is an arcade/strategy game i which the player controls a single "Mauler Assault Tank in one of 16 scenarios (missions) i the ultra war, fought between two dominant race in the new World. Such are the defensiv capabilities of each side, full scale attacks ar suicidal, so any offensive moves are, l necessity, small "behind the lines" action performed by elite troops in specially designe vehicles. The Mauler is the latest such machine capable of being lifted in and out of hosti territory by fa stealth chopper and armed with t most advance weaponry t Northern scienti can devise.



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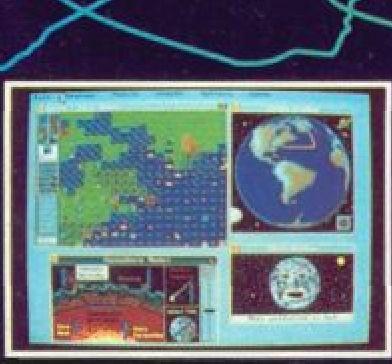

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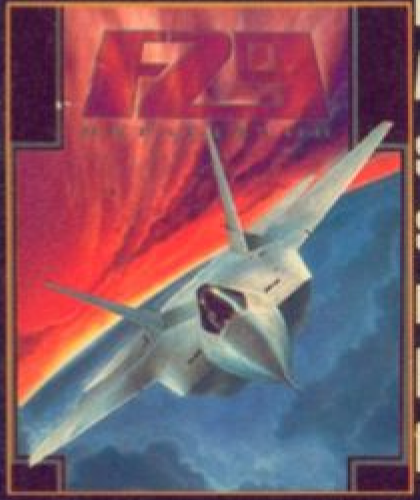
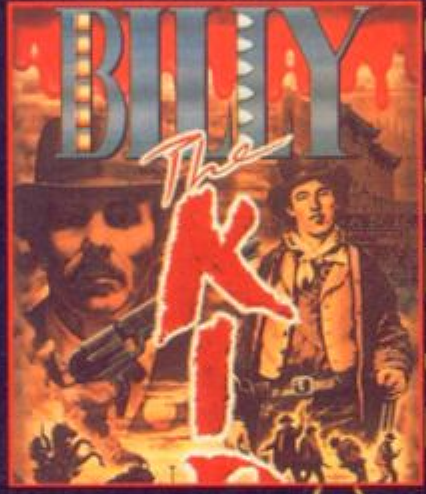
THE RIGHT STUFF

F 29 Retaliator presents the fastest and most detailed graphical enviroment ever seen in a flight simulator. This is the only flight simulation to provide 100 complex missions over four intense battle senarios. The only flight simulation to provide detailed daily war update reports. The only flight simulation to present the latest in aerodynamic technology introducing ECOP cockpits, backwinder AAMS, supercruise, stealth and more! F29 Retaliator is that flight simulation.



GUN LAW

"BILLY THE KID" is a one or two player action/strategy game set in the Wild West, which allows the player to assume the identity of either a gun totting desperado with a heart of gold , Billy himself or his ex-best friend, sharp shooting, law abiding pillar of the community, Sheriff Pat Garrett. They are in love with the same woman and ultimately, in a nail biting climatic finale, are going to end up pointing guns at each other. Only one character can walk away from this showdown BUT THAT'S JUST THE WAY OF THE WEST



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> "All that is human must be retrograde, if it does not advance."
>
> *Edward Gibbon*

reviews

Our Screentest section extends to a glorious 35 pages this month, with the top games receiving depthy 3-page treatments.

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67 **VIZ** *Virgin Games*

Sony, music, technology and now movie giant is making itself ready for an assault on the CD market. Feature - Page 22.

Space Quest IV - Latex Babes of Estros

***Space Quest IV* - Three-page special - Page 50**

***Captain Planet* is here to save the Earth from its careless inhabitants. Preview his exploits on P.18**

THE ULTIMATE!

***Super Mario World* is arguably the most playable game ever. But what is it about the escapades of the moustachioed pizza-man that addict players so instantly and so fully? Is it the graphics? Is it the control? Is it the variety? Or none of the above. Whatever the answers, there are lessons for us all in Mario's madness.**

We analyse the phenomenon on Page 24

Probably the best game in the *Super Mario World*.

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PRINTING Severn Valley Press, Caerphilly

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The European Computer Trade Show took place in the Business Design Centre last month. Read all about the deals, the missed opportunities and the worst organised party in the history of the planet. See page 40.

TAKE YOUR PICK! **This month sees ACE covering both the current games scene and the possibilities of future technology in as comprehensive way as possible. The issue has a heavy games bias this time, with thorough features on *Mario, Captain Planet, Air Duel* and *Falcon 3.* There's a full thirty-five pages of games reviews including *Space Quest IV, Gods, Alien Storm* and *F15II.* But tech fans need not worry, as we've assembled a free supplement 100% dedicated to CDTV, Virtual Reality, and Full Motion Video. And there's even a breakdown of those over-used and over complicated terms attached to each. And why the decision to opt for this dangerously exciting mixture? It's all part of our never-ending quest to provide our readers with the ultimate monthly guide to Advanced Computer Entertainment.**

features

18 CAPTAIN PLANET
Mindscape is currently putting together two versions of the exploits of the *new* mean green fighting machine. We talk to the programmers of both and ask the folks as Mindscape about their hopes for the product.

22 SONY ON CD
ACE talks to Sony US regarding their not-entirely half-hearted entrance into the CD arena.

24 *SUPER* MARIO WORLD
Super Mario World on the Super Famicom is possibly the most playable game in the world. After literally months of play, we feel ready to offer our opinions as to the very essence of its greatness.

32 FALCON 3
For those of you who like your flight sims realistic, Spectrum Holobyte are keen to cater for the most demanding of tastes, with Falcon 3 boasting a topographic landscape as well as a host of other state-of-the-art features. How did they do it?

39 RETURN OF THE CONFERENCE!
If you've ever wondered exactly how a software company works, you'll be keen to take us up on our offer to visit a Major Firm and talk to the bosses and the programmers.

40 ECTS SHOW REPORT
We report from this year's computer trade show where the industry folk have been deciding what you'll be playing this Christmas.

44 AIR DUEL
Glyn WIlliams' multi-craft flight game promises to offer players all-out flying action, with the emphasis on the thrills and spills of heroic acrobatics and far less gametime wasted on toggling flaps and avoiding heat currents. Sounds like a good deal to us.

REGULARS

7 ACE GAMES NEWS
The Blues Brothers, Cyber Fight, Sonic the Hedgehog, Battletoads and the Addams Family.

11 ACE TECH NEWS
The latest news of widgits, gizmos and events on the hardware scene from the ECTS show.

15 LETTERS
Speak out!

76 TRICKS'n'TACTICS
Solutions, codes, cheats and hints for the best games of the moment.

FREE! FREE! FREE!

The second in our occasional series of full-colour, full size, fully free supplements is our up-to-the-minute, cutting edge ACE Technoguide. Written and edited by Steve Cooke, it offers a genuinely useful analysis of games technology at the moment, and what the future holds. And it's all presented in an easy-to-follow format.

Space Quest IV - Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers. **Sierra's excellent graphics are employed in their most depthy and tricky adventure yet. See the review on page 50.**

COVER STORY

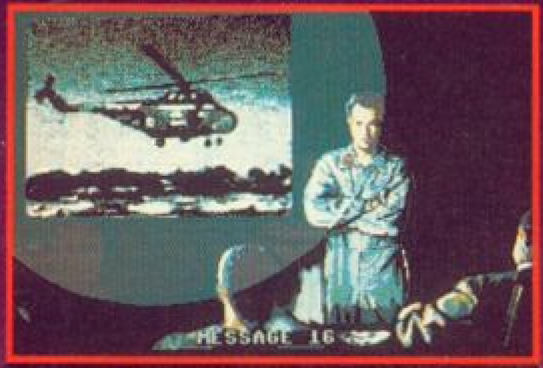
Spectrum Holobyte's *Falcon 3* boasts a 3D topographic landscape, giving it one of the most realistic combat environments in which to fly. The added fact of the Electronic Battlefield System enabling players with forthcoming Spectrum Holobyte titles to appear in each other's games makes it possibly one of the most important developments in simulation games for a very long time. See Page 32

ACE

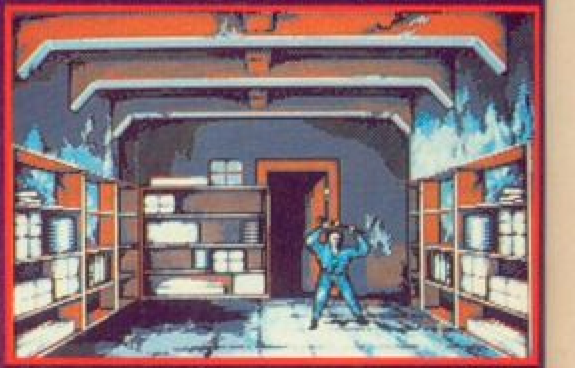
JUNE 1991

ALCATRAZ

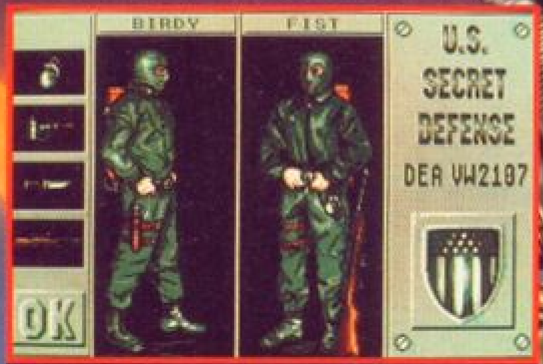
The island of Alcatraz stands empty and discarded - a relic of the past. But, as night settles, the ruins of the old prison comes to life. In an ironic twist of fate, Alcatraz is now the hide out of an evil drugs cartel, led by Miguel Tardiez, its cruel and callous chief. As a crack commando you are about to undertake the most perilous and daring mission ever. Your task - penetrate the island of Alcatraz and capture Tardiez. If you fail the State Department will simply deny any knowledge of your existence. There's no such thing as a dead hero.



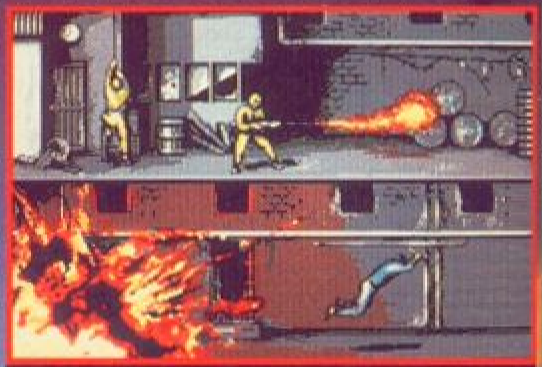
It's the final countdown, as HQ gives the last briefing.



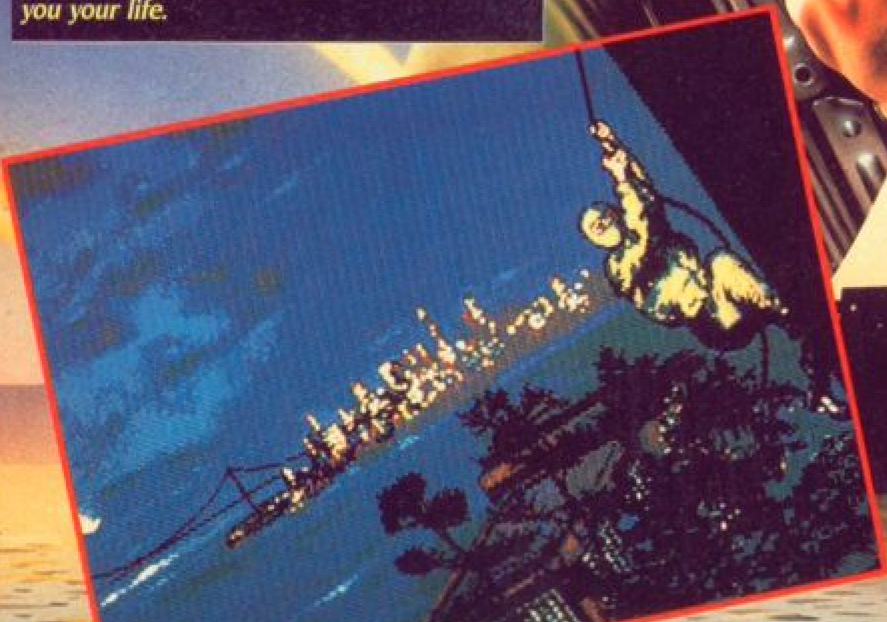
Track down Tardiez's men, as you move ever closer to the very centre of corruption.

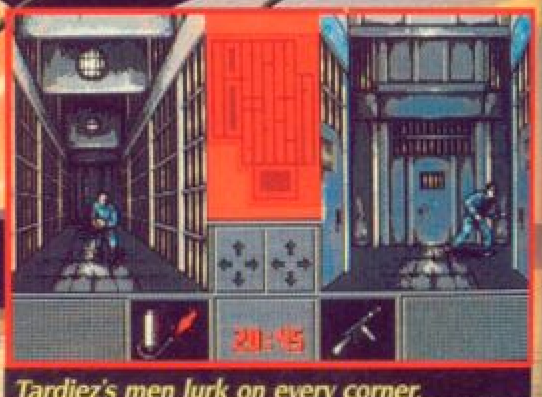


Prepare with care, a simple mistake will cost you your life.



One false move and your cover is blown.





Tardiez's men lurk on every corner.

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NEWS
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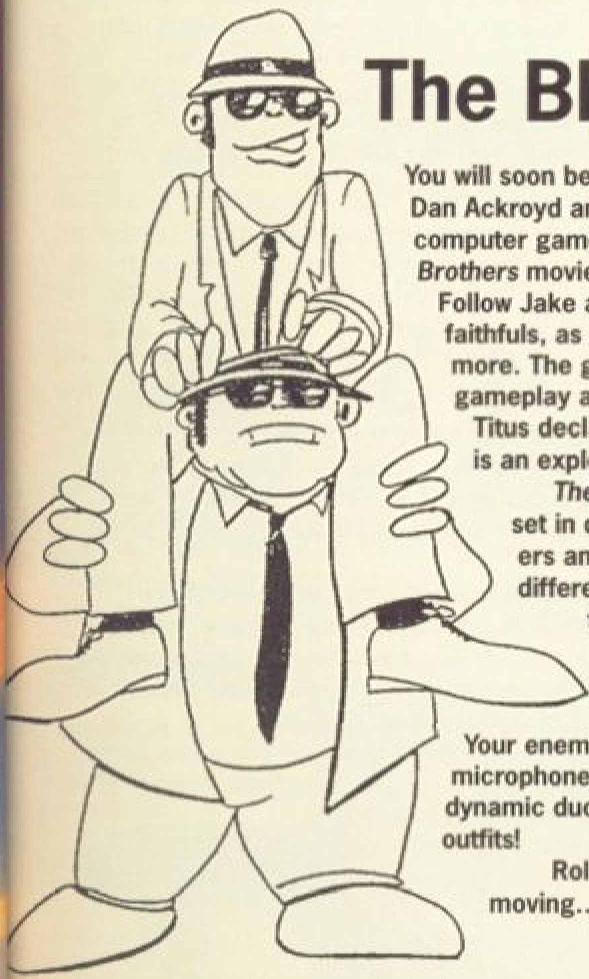
The Chaos Engine
Will the next Bitmap Brothers game be an object lesson in trendy mathematics? Find out next month...

Rik Haynes meets the world's fastest sprite...



The Blues Brothers

You will soon be able to relive the cult comedy capers of Dan Ackroyd and John Belushi when Titus unleashes a computer game inspired by the utterly brilliant *Blues Brothers* movie.

Follow Jake and Elwood, the all-time Rhythm 'n' Blues faithfuls, as they prepare to conquer the stage once more. The game includes over 200 different scenes of gameplay and the original Blues Brothers' soundtrack. Titus declares this piece of interactive entertainment is an explosive blend of action, comedy and music.

***The Blues Brothers* game consists of five levels set in department stores, warehouse, prison, sewers and city streets. Jack and Elwood each have different qualities related to their physical characteristics. Thus lean and lanky Elwood can jump higher whilst Jack can thread his way through certain places more easily thanks to his smaller, albeit fatter, size.**

Your enemies flee in fear as soon as Jack grabs a microphone or Elwood hoots on his harmonica. The dynamic duo can also fly once they've found some bee outfits!

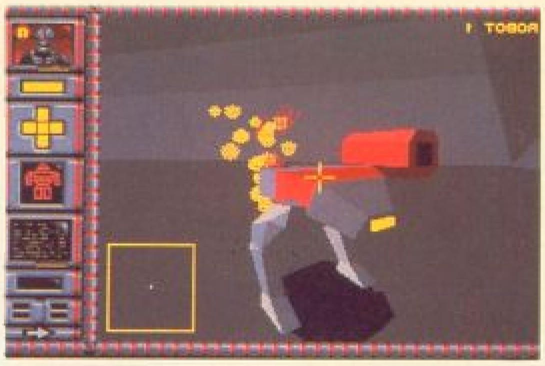
Rolling, rolling, rolling, keep those doggies moving...

Mirrorsoft and Acclaim Get Together

Mirrorsoft and Acclaim Entertainment from the USA have agreed that Imageworks will market and distribute popular Acclaim titles throughout Europe and Australasia under the Acclaim and LJN labels.

Acclaim Entertainment, Inc is a major American Nintendo publisher and has either released or is currently developing NES and Gameboy titles based around *The Simpsons, Terminator 2, Narc, Total Recall* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* to name but five. No details of the agreement or games affected have emerged thus far. Meanwhile...

As exclusively reported in the last issue of ACE, Mirrorsoft has finally announced it has the worldwide home computer, console and handheld rights for the *Alien III* science-fiction movie from 20th Century Fox. Interestingly, the firm is still keeping tight-lipped about owning the CD game rights. Mirrorsoft has decided to go for the Lucasfilm Games approach to this license and will release both an arcade and adventure title on Amiga, ST and PC. The games will be available early next year to coincide with the European cinema release. *Alien III* stars Sigourney Weaver and Charles Dance, and has been directed by the geezer responsible for those raunchy Madonna music videos. The movie is currently in post-production at Pinewood Studios. And why not?



Cyber Fight

From *Powerdrome* author Michael Powell comes *Cyber Fight* (working title), a release with spectacular 3D graphics which Electronic Arts speculates is the first 'Virtual Reality' combat game.

Set in the future, *Cyber Fight* is the name of an arena-based sport. Five player-controlled contestants do battle in mighty exo-skeletal fighting machines. Before combat commences, you must arm your Cyber Fighter with sledge hammers, rotary cannons, wire-guided bazookas or nuclear warheads. The variety of Cybernetic combat enhancements include radar vision, invisibility fields and battle computers. Gravity, friction, inertia and elasticity all influence the combatants as they run, jump and fly through six battle arenas.

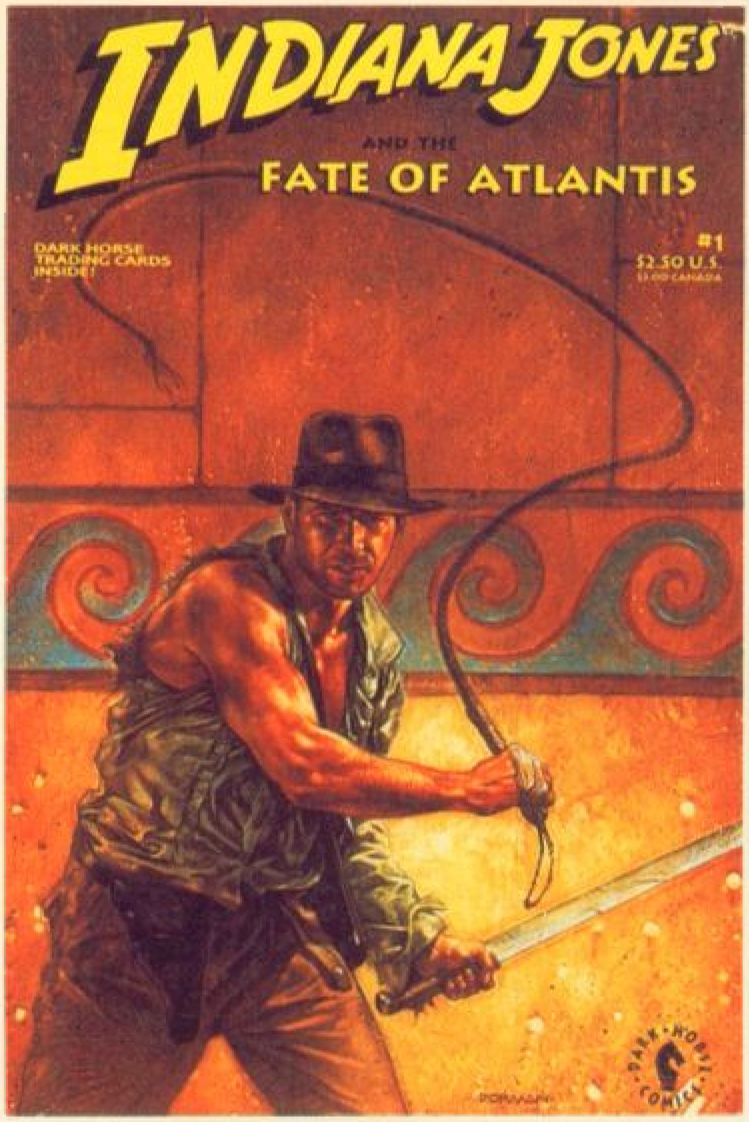
Once victorious, you're able to scavenge the remains of your computer- or human-controlled opponent for the spoils of war. You can trade this junk for better hardware. Cyber Fight features one- or two-player action via split-screen or datalink.

The 3D can't fail to impress. Light-sourced and Gouraud shading software technology accurately model metallic surfaces and particle models represent smoke, rocket exhausts and explosions. The game supports 256-colour VGA graphics and all major sound boards.

Cyber Fight will be released on PC in the autumn, with an Amiga version planned for later in the year. *Cyber Fight* is the most exciting release from EA since *Powermonger* – except for *Birds of Prey* of course!

Michael Powell and Glyn Williams, author of *Warhead* and *Air Duel*, are apparently good mates. Turn to page 44 to find out more...

GOLF-BALL-ISTIC
Micropose has taken a break from bashing the commies in helicopter gunships and stealth fighters to swing-out with 'what will be one of the most realistic golf games on the market'. Up to four players can play six challenging courses in 3D Golf (working title). Four of these are accurately mapped from real-life and to appreciate the contours of the land the view changes to a follow-on camera which tracks the golf-ball's flight. 3D Golf will initially be available on ST in the summer. Amiga and PC versions will follow later in the year.



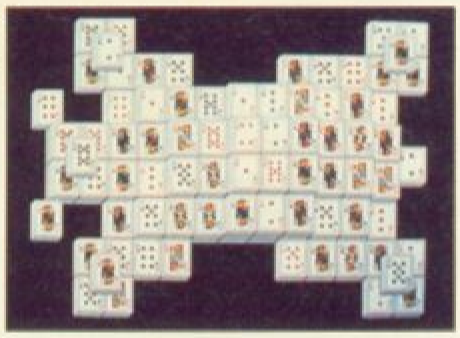
Indiana Jones 4

Is Lucasfilm Games trying to persuade Steven Spielberg and George Lucas into doing a fourth Indiana Jones action movie? Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis is superficially based around a comic doing the rounds in Forbidden Planet and Virgin Megastores. Again, Lucasfilm Games is working on adventure and action titles – both due for release in November. The PC adaption of Indy 4 will feature full 256-colour VGA graphics with stirring tunes blasting out of your AdLib soundboard. Sadly, there's still no news on that new Indy movie.

Their Finest Hour

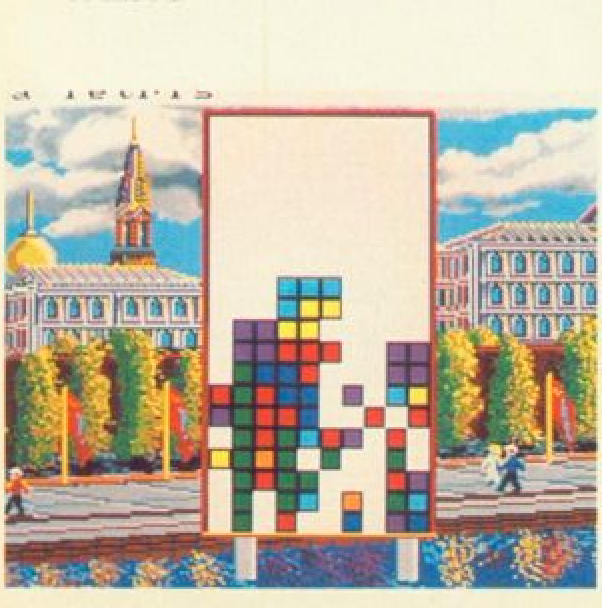
Take to the skies again with this add-on datadisk for *Their Finest Hour: The Battle of Britain* historic air combat sim from Lucasfilm Games and US Gold. For £15.99 you get new missions and a chance to fly some first-rate aircraft from the early part of World War Two.

Shanghai II


Look into the dragon's eye with *Shanghai II*

Just when the boss thought it was safe to buy you that new PC comes yet another infuriatingly addictive puzzle game destined to stop all work for at least two hours per day. With *Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye* from Activision you can experience the intrigue and strategy of this oriental game enhanced with new tile layouts, animation and sound-effects. As you master *Shanghai II*, you earn the right to take-on the challenge of *Dragon's Eye* – a game of placing and blocking tiles against the computer. *Shanghai II: Dragon's Eye* will soon be available on Amiga, ST and PC.

Tetris


***Tetris* days are here again**

Has Infogrames, the French creator of Captain Blood and Purple Satin Day, run out of new ideas? "Like a good old film that you love to see over and over again," so the sales-pitch goes, "Tetris will be again on the shelves to complete your private software library." I wonder how much money Soviet programmer Alexei Pajitnov is making from this re-release deal?

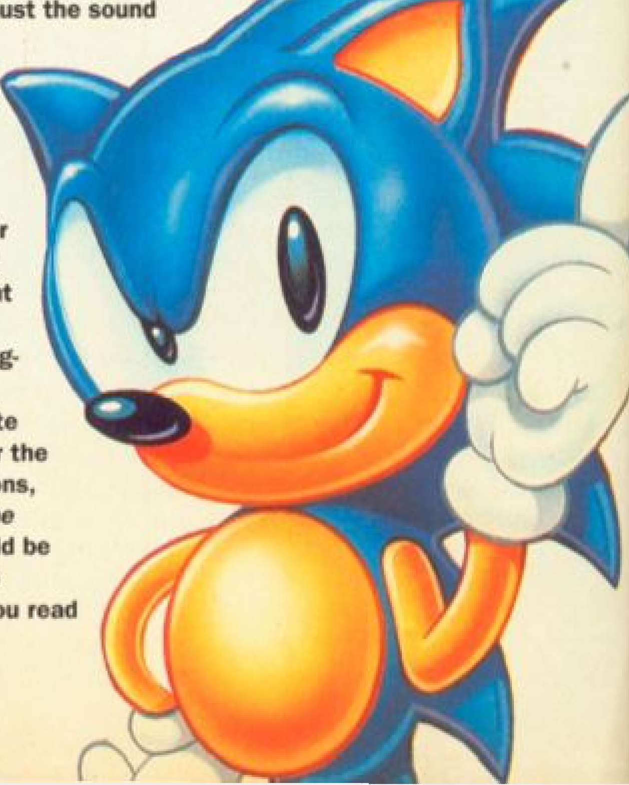
Sonic Is Seized

As Sega's crack cutie game appears on the Megadrive, US Gold has secured the home computer rights to *Sonic the Hedgehog*. The deal comes as little surprise in the light of the Birmingham-based firm's on-going agreement to convert Sega coin-ops like *G-Loc* over to the Amiga, ST and PC.

***Sonic the Hedgehog* was the 'darling' of the influential Winter Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas earlier this year, with many veteran designers and players saying it was the best arcade platform game they'd ever seen. Some even went on to say Sonic beats the best-selling *Super Mario Bros* games from Nintendo.**

"What we've created is a delightful little fellow whose unique personality explodes with every minute of gameplay," says Sega. "You're probably wondering how Sonic got his name. Well, our little friend's ultra-sonic running and jumping abilities are guaranteed to bust the sound barrier wide open. As a matter of fact, to the best of Sega's knowledge, there is no other game character in existence that compares to Sonic's mind-boggling pace."

No release date has been set for the computer versions, though *Sonic the Hedgehog* should be available on the Megadrive as you read this. Happy Hedgehoging!



The Pay Off

This one is for anybody who hasn't had enough *Cadaver* lately. *The Pay Off* is an extra levels datadisk for Cadaver which consists of four more levels with about 200 new rooms to explore. All this can for yours for only £14.99 on Amiga and ST. Renegade Software told us that while the Bitmap Brothers' Philip Wilcox, Steve Kelly, Dan Malone and Mike Montgomery were working on the original game, local council workers digging in the street outside their Wapping offices unearthed a real Cadaver... a mummified 16th Century corpse!

CRAZY CARS III
The second title in this series of rioting racing games has sold over 300,000 copies worldwide. The Titus team hopes to do better with Crazy Cars III...

Battletoads

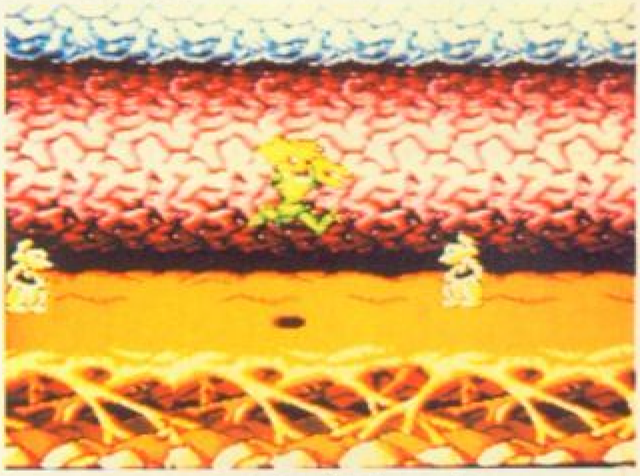
British gamers can look forward to playing *Battletoads*, the smash hit 12-level NES game, now that The Sales Curve and Tradewest have signed a joint publishing and development agreement. "Compared to *Battletoads*," suggests the Texas-based Tradewest, "*Turtles* seem like pond scum."

Other Tradewest NES titles to be converted to 16-bit computer formats and published on the Storm label include *Double Dragon III: The Rosetta Stones* licensed from Technos in Japan, *Asylum* and *Solar Jetman: Hunt for the Golden Warship*.

Martial arts bruiser brothers Billy and Jimmy are back in a 14-level beat'em-up with *Double Dragon III*. Their quest takes them through five missions in America, China, Japan, Italy and Egypt. The computer game should be ready for Christmas and a *Double Dragon* movie is currently scheduled to be released early next year. *Asylum* is a "top view three-player interactive heavy metal fantasy action adventure coin-op licensed from the Leyland Corp." Phew!

Old Spectrum players will be pleased to see the return of the madcap hero of Ultimate's *Jetpac* game in *Solar Jetman*. The very astute Ultimate team moved onto producing games for the Nintendo console before any other European developer had even heard of the beast. They even managed to make some extra cash by selling their brand-name to US Gold. That's why they're called Rare now. In the game, Jetman must use his pod and pac to explore 12 alien planets in his quest to find and rebuild the Golden Warship.

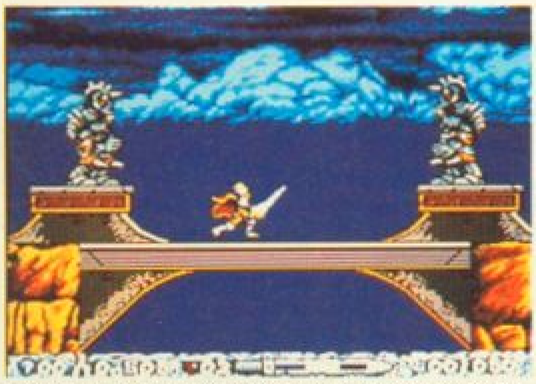
The Sales Curve is now looking to put its chart-busting *SWIV* shoot'em-up onto the Megadrive and Super Famicom consoles. The south-London firm was recently promoted from Registered Nintendo Developer to European Nintendo Licensee, enabling The Sales Curve to publish Nintendo software on its Storm label throughout Europe. Just in time for 1992!



Tradewest says compared to *Battletoads*, *Turtles* seem like pond scum.

MORE MONKEY BUSINESS
Lucasfilm Games in the States is currently devising a sequel to the Secret of Monkey Island. *The original cinematic adventure featured a wide variety of entertaining puzzles.* Chuck's Revenge *will be here in early 1992.*

RAMPARTS
This Tengen coin-op takes you back to medieval times where you play a territorial game of castles, battles and cannon attacks. Domark is releasing Ramparts *on the Amiga, ST and PC in January 1992. Build those battlements or else!*



Is it abird ? Is it a plane ?Is it the follow-up to the *Lotus Esprit Challenge*?

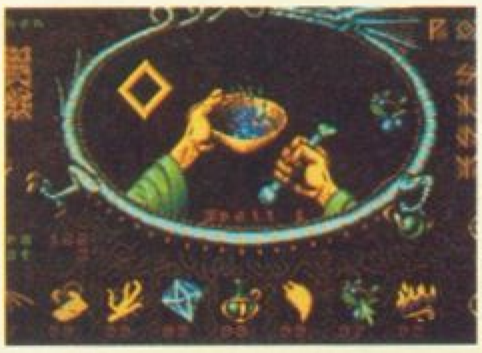
Pegasus

Gremlin has taken a break from all those racing games to work on *Pegasus*, a colourful romp through the six planes of existence. As Persius you must collect all the fragments of some crystals before Satan takes total control of your mortal world. Each level is split into two stages. The first has you flying with Pegasus, collecting crystals and killing creatures to survive. Then you run, jump and fight your way across land before battling the end-of-level demon. Can you save the world?

The Addams Family

Ocean has snapped up the computer and Nintendo game rights to the forthcoming film based around the frightful American comedy TV-series from the sixties. *The Addams Family* movie will have an all-new cast including Anjelica Houston and Christopher Lloyd, the crazy character from *Taxi* and *The Back to the Future* films.

TURTLE SHELL-OUT
As Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2 *shoots to the top of the US movie charts making $10 million (!) in the first four days of release, Mirrorsoft announces its plan to convert Konami's cowabunga coin-op onto Amiga, ST and PC. The conversion is being handled by Probe and will be available towards the end of the year.*



Mirrorsoft believes *Legend* will become a landmark program

Legend

Set in a dark world, *Legend* is the next fantasy role playing game from Tag, the programming team behind *Bloodwych*. The game itself is split between 2D views depicting locations in the kingdom and an isometric-3D display during the dungeon sequences. Imageworks is introducing *Legend* at the end of 1991 on Amiga, ST and PC.

Accolade Plays Hardball

Accolade has officially entered the 16-bit video games market with Ballistic, a new label dedicated to producing titles for the Sega Megadrive, NEC PC Engine and Nintendo Super Famicom.

The first three Ballistic games will be *Hardball, Star Control* and *Turrican*. These games will each cost £35.99 and should be in the shops from next month. Titles due on the Super Famicom and PC Engine this year include a golf sim tied into Accolade's Jack Nicklaus license and a soccer game. There may even be something on the Sega Gamegear colour handheld console before the end of 1991.

***Hardball* is the all-time best selling computer baseball simulation with sales of more than 250,000 units so far. Accolade infers the Megadrive version is the very first 8-megabit sports game. Anyway, this adaption has fully digitised speech and sound, numerous batting and pitching options, and a team manager feature for total strategic control.**

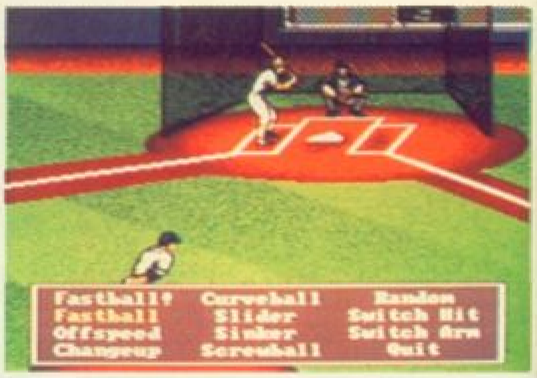
***Star Control* (which had a mixed reception) is a game of 'ship-to-ship combat and galactic conquest'. Accolade maintains this very primitive shoot'em-up represents the industry's very first 12-megabit video game. ACE doesn't know where all the memory has gone, there certainly isn't any sign of it in the gameplay, graphics or sound!**

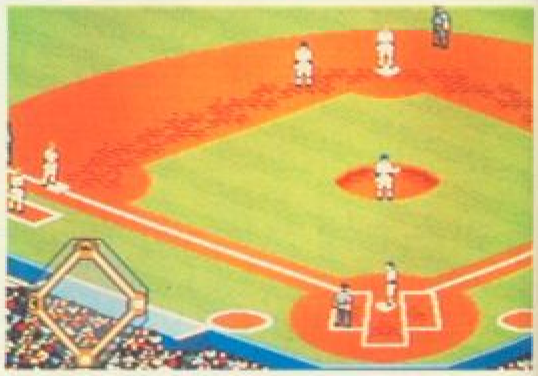
***Tyrrican* is a futuristic arcade-action game originally released on computer format by Rainbow Arts. This cart is packed with multiple levels and special effects such as waterfalls, storms and thunder.**

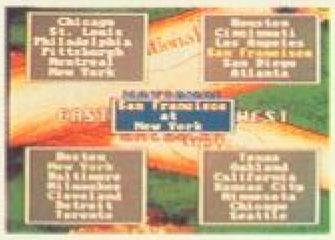
Accolade has also announced a European distribution deal with Intracorp/Capstone, the American publisher of quite a few movie and TV-based games for the PC, Amiga, ST and Macintosh. The agreement includes such titles as the old cops 'n' robbers television show *Miami Vice* and the off-beat movie *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure*. Didn't Ocean own the rights to this film?

CONSTRUCTOR

System 3 has decided to go fully 16-bit with this strategy game. "Constructor is a massive project in every aspect of the word," reckon the guys from Pinner in Middlesex, "Take the role of a land developer, pitching your wits against the computer as you both strive to capitalise on the buildings you're are erecting and renting out. Constructor brings you face to face with all the corruption associated with being a big time property tycoon." There doesn't seem to be a Ninja in sight!

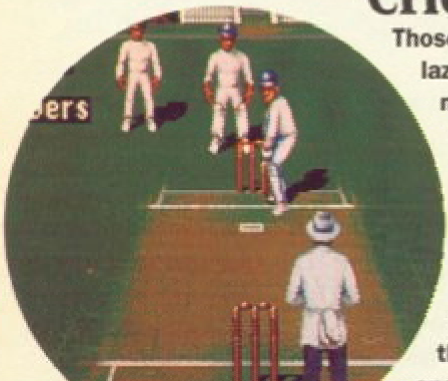




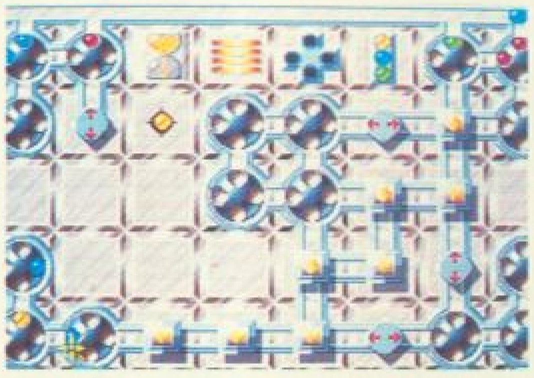


Accolade says Hardball is the first 8-mergabit sports game on the Megadrive !

Graham Gooch WC Cricket



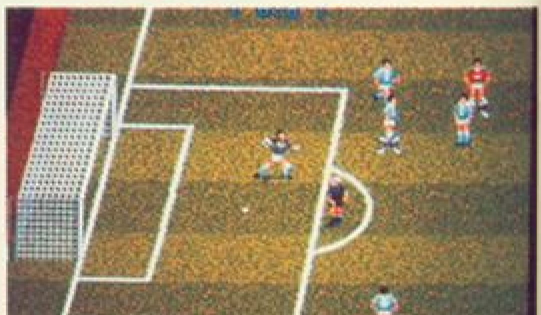
Those hazy, crazy, lazy days of summer are almost here... and so is that Graham Gooch cricket game. Audiogenic has dusted off the source code and spruced up the graphics of this classic sports sim and released it onto the Amiga, ST and PC under the grandiose title of *Graham Gooch World Class Cricket*. The original *GG's Test Cricket* was released in 1985 and has sold over 60,000 copies. Audiogenic asserts the new version is the ultimate cricket simulation. "All the features you could ever imagine along with incredible animation make this the most exciting cricket game of all time – even if it rains."



That's Illogical

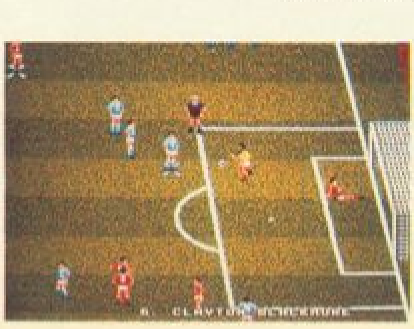
Guess what? Yet another one of those arcade puzzlers is coming your way. German software house Rainbow Arts describes *Logical* as a truly skillful and thrilling game. This brain teaser has 100 levels, four different backdrops and a construction kit for further mind twisters. *Tetris* has a lot to answer for!

Manchester United Europe



The team may have lost the Rumbelows League Cup last month, but that hasn't stopped Krisalis from launching a second soccer sim based around Manchester United. The first game was released in February 1990 and has now sold over 110,000 copies. *Manchester United Europe* takes the team into the European arena of club knockout competitions featuring The European Cup, European Cup Winners Cup and UEFA Cup. The game also includes the opportunity to play in the European Super Cup and the World Club Championship held each year in Japan. Krisalis took onboard the constructive ideas and suggestions from over 3000 reply cards and has completely reworked the original football game. *Manchester United Europe* incorporates a combination of management and arcade action – along with full goal-keeper control and one to four player options. According to Krisalis, *Manchester United* is the biggest brand-name in sport. What did ever happen to that Liverpool game from Ocean?

The first Manchester United game has sold over 110,000 copies

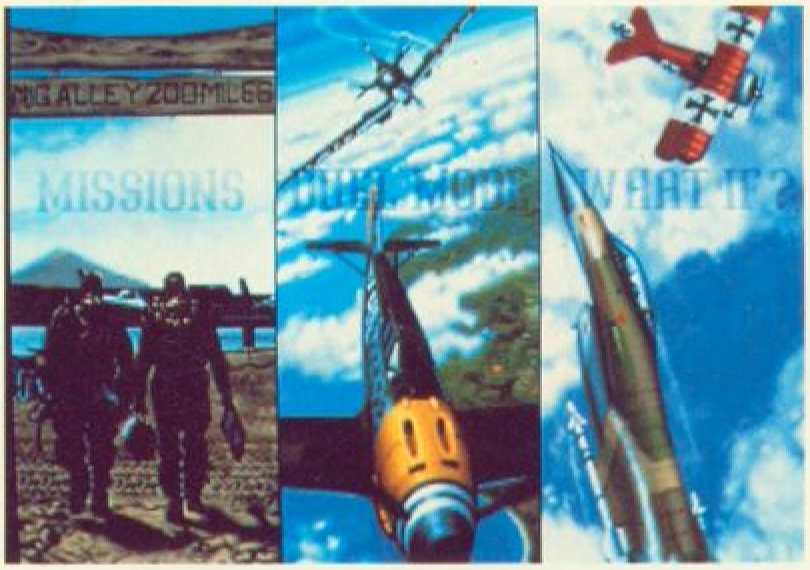


BACK TO THE FAMICOM

Those guys at Mirrorsoft just won't stay still. Ecseco Industries in Japan is now converting Mirrorsoft's Back to the Future Part 2 computer game onto the Nintendo Super Famicom. The film has become one of the highest grossing in the history of Japanese cinema.

Death Or Glory

Death or Glory lets flight-sim fans reenact 76 years of air combat drama courtesy of Activision. You're able to choose between 12 different warplanes, each based around a NASA flight physics model, and fly a mission in any one of six eras. Go for Sopwith Camel biplane from World War One or jump into a Spitfire and dogfight a Messerschmidt 109. Why not try a bombing run through the Falklands in a Sea Harrier? *Death or Glory* also incorporates a 'What If?' feature where you can pit an F-4 Phantom jet-fighter against a Fokker DR1 flown by the Red Baron. This game should be available for the PC in October.



Back To The War!

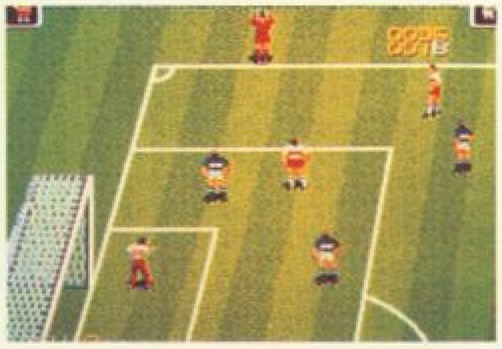
After attempts at producing original software, Elite has decided to go back to converting coin-op games onto major home micro formats.

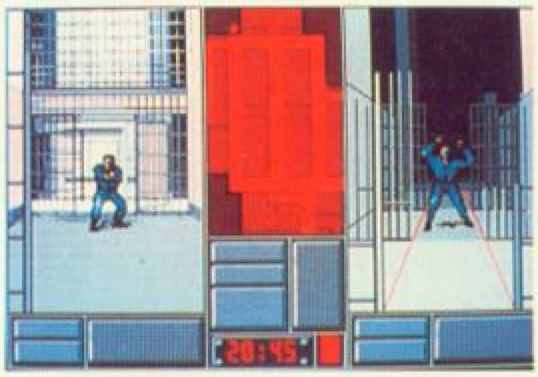
The West Midlands company achieved great success in the mid-1980's when its conversions of Paperboy, Space Harrier, Ghosts'n'Goblins and Commando hit the top of the charts. Since those heady days, Elite has concentrated on console development and games such as Overlander and Gremlins 2.

The four new titles from Elite, currently scheduled for release between November and Spring 1992, will be 16-bit conversions of European Championship 1992 (Tecmo), Caveman Ninja (Data East), Suzuka GP/Winning Run II (Namco) and Edward Randy (Data East).

Formerly entitled Tecmo's World Cup'90, the first game is a soccer simulation adapted to tie-in with next summers eagerly-awaited event in Sweden. "In co-operation with Tecmo, we will be using the source code and graphic data from the coin-op original to produce a conversion of the very highest quality," proposes Elite.

Eldritch the Cat, the development team responsible for Shadow of the Beast and Last Ninja 3, is converting Caveman Ninja. While Suzuka GP/Winning Run II pits driver and car against Japan's world championship circuit at Suzuka. Elite says Edward Randy is a truly different looking game with fights taking place on the wings of a fleet of biplanes as they pitch and roll all over the skies. "The way Edward Randy uses his whip for moving, balance and as a deadly weapon is one of the reasons why this new Data East coin-op stands out from the crowd."





Alcatraz

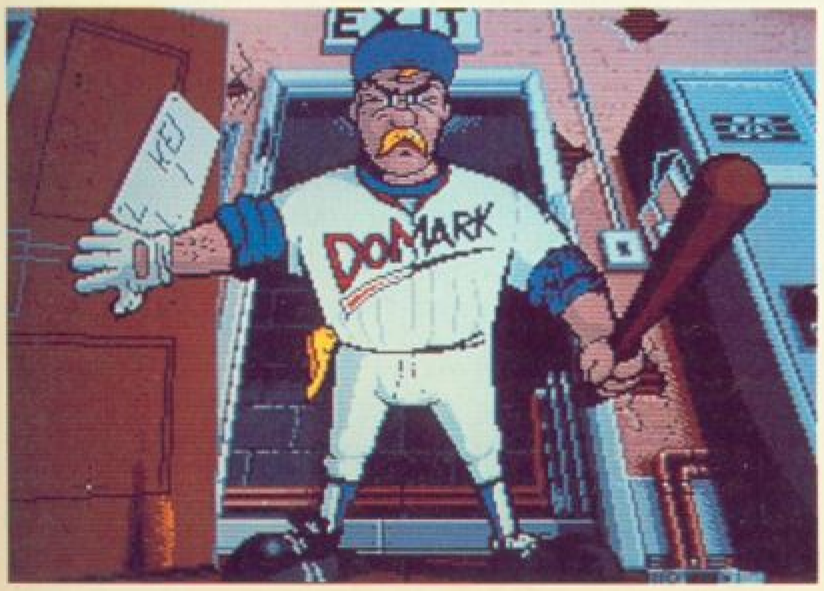
Infogrames has decided to produce a sequel to its highly successful *Hostages* game. You lead this commando team assigned to capture a drug tycoon from his lair in Alcatraz, San Francisco. The four hand-picked 'cokebusters' consist of two camouflaged intervention men (equipped with knives, cross-bows and fire-arms) and two crack shots placed on the top of the buildings. *Alcatraz* employs some novel gameplay where sound is crucial to success or failure – you have to avoid the slightest sound so that your team won't be spotted. During the game you have to climb cell walls, destroy the cocaine stocks with a flame-thrower and search the prison for a helicopter. *Alcatraz* is available now for Amiga, ST and PC.

DROP SOLDIER

Up to 16 players can form a platoon in Drop Soldier, *a futuristic strategy RPG reminiscent of* The Forever War *novel by Joe Haldeman. Set in the distant future, the drop soldier is a highly trained combat trooper equipped with the latest in military technology, including a power suit which enables the soldier to run, faster, jump higher and carry more powerful weaponry than any ordinary grunt. Imageworks thinks programmer Ross Goodley has even surpassed his critically-acclaimed game,* Gravity. Drop Soldier *will be published on the PC, Amiga and ST at the end of 1991.*

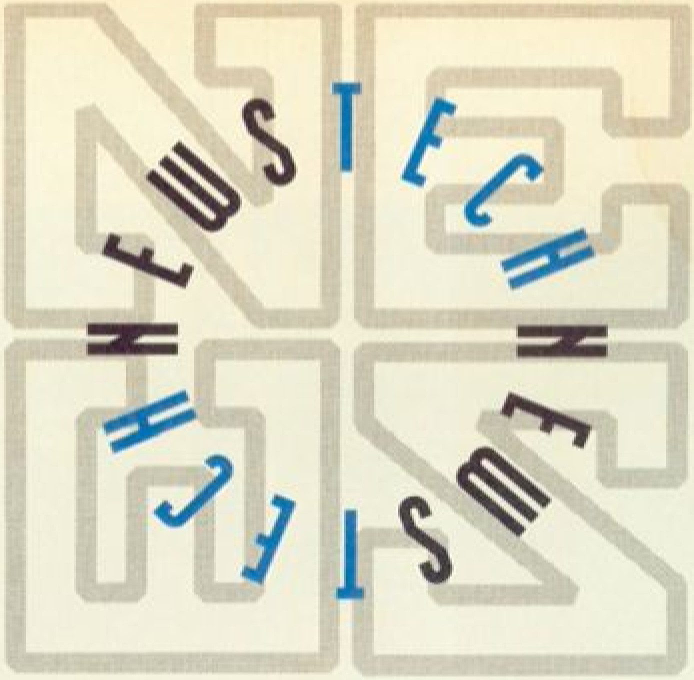
SIM EARTH

Prestigious Japanese games developer Imagineer is releasing the Super Famicom version of this game, er, extraordinary program. Meanwhile, Maxis has decided to call the Ant Farm game featured in last month's ACE, Sim Ant. *You know it makes sense.*



RBI 2 Baseball

The kind people at Domark are inserting a 'free' Baseball cap into every copy of *RBI 2 Baseball.* Look cool and play hard. This Amiga, ST and PC conversion of the NES sports game from Tengen features 26 pro teams with real stats from the 1989 season, close-up shots and instant replays of home runs. "The animation is superb and the action fluid," promises Domark. "When in play, the 'camera' follows the flight of the ball and then zooms to follow your batter's progress from base to base.A radar map at the bottom of the screen gives you an overview of how play is progressing and allows you to decide how far your player should run for, or if fielding, which base to throw the ball to." For those of you not-in-the-know, RBI stands for Runs Batted In (the number of runs scored as a result of a player's hit, whether they be by him or the result of getting other players home). The next ACE sports special will appear shortly...



EAST GOES ELECTRIC

Video Salons are the latest craze in the Soviet Union. These chic cafes go on 24-hour auto-play of the latest music videos and cheap Australian soap operas directly beamed in by satellite. Meanwhile, punters in East Berlin are buying surveillance hardware once used by the Secret Police in dodgy underground sales. It seems the hard-up civil servants are trading in their Walther PPK pistols and bugging devices for some hard currency. No credit accepted here, comrade!

Are video games bad for your health? Rik Haynes investigates...

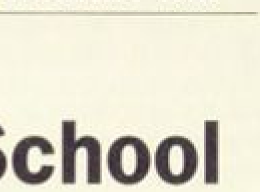
Super Mario School

Nintendo is taking no chances with the next generation of game designers and programmers. The far-sighted console company has set-up a school in Tokyo to teach keen coders how to animate sprites, design a platform game from top to bottom, and fine-tune collision detection.

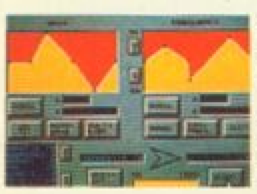
The school is appropriately named Mario and teaches 30 would-be Nintendo games engineers how to code the perfect console game on the Super Famicom, Gameboy and NES. Literally thousands of hopefuls have applied entry. A job at Nintendo is virtually guaranteed for the most successful students.

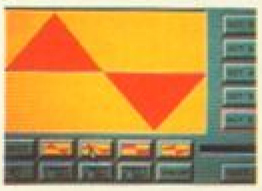
ACE hopes to visit this school for games developers soon. Look out for our exclusive report in a future issue...

Music Master



Ubisoft's latest is a departure for the French games developer. *Music Master* is a musical studio program for the Amiga, ST and PC where you can create and modify your own sound samples and compose muzak. "*Music Master* finally transforms your computer into an actual synthesizer," Ubisoft proclaims. The package comes with 10 ready-made music-tracks, 100 sound FX and the capability to integrate its audio into your own programs. The Atari ST version is also fully compatible with MIDI and the MV16 soundcard used by Ubisoft in the game *BAT*.





Video Seizure

Playing video games could damage your health... if you suffer from photosensitive epilepsy.

The parents of a 15-year-old girl from Michigan in the USA have filed a law suit against Nintendo, claiming a video game caused an epileptic seizure. The young girl was playing *Kid Icarus* on her NES console when she suffered a seizure states the family lawyer Douglas Webster. "She had a grand mal seizure and was totally unconscious," Webster says, "Her doctor said it was a videogame-induced epilepsy."

Photosensitive epilepsy occurs in approximately 3% of epilepsy patients the US, that's one in 10,000 of the population. Photosensitive epileptics can suffer seizures after exposure to flashing lights, television screens and video games.

A healthy girl before the attack, she will now have to take medication for the forseeable future. The law suit seeks at least $10,000 in damages. Lynne Gray, a spokeswoman for Nintendo of America, says the company is reserving comment on the case until it has had a chance to review the lawsuit. Current studies suggest there is no reason to believe videogame seizure is strictly related to Nintendo product.

Fantastic Voyage On CD

In a follow-up story to our exclusive report last month, Psygnosis co-founder Ian Hetherington has told ACE that he now plans to produce three games based around Psygnosis' revolutionary CD-ROM games system.

"We now have more than one game in production," confirms Hetherington, "One of them is set inside the body in a *Fantastic Voyage*-style game with a working title of *Inner Explorer*. We're doing fractalised blood vessels. It's all very abstract, Cathedral-like structures which you can fly around in with multiple ships killing rogue viruses and that sort of thing. It's very go out there and wipe them out. Obviously, different viruses respond to different things. One craft is for passing down the blood vessels, one is airborne for being in the lungs, and another moves in and out of muscular tissue. *Inner Explorer* has an educational element because it's spread over a sixty year life-cycle compressed into something like 10 hours of gameplay. This educational spin-off will teach you about the inner workings of the body."

Psygnosis is also planning to use the 'Fractal Engine' CD-ROM software technology on a time-travelling sci-fi game and a pure military combat product which will use similar imagery to the *Planetside* technology demonstration revealed in the last issue of ACE.

"The reason we want to do this type of game is because we know we can run 3D in real-time on just about every CD-ROM machine," establishes Hetherington. "We can model about 10,000 polygons on a ship and reduce that to just 30 polygons which we can plot it in real-time and draw anything in-between. Everything we do now will be window-based, if the processing power is not available the window shrinks."

"The idea is to be on just about everything. The investment in the product is so massive that we have to have it on multiple formats. Our CD-ROM intentions are to support dedicated machines, which are either console-based or like CD-I and CDTV, MS-DOS and Macintosh. Anything we design now will work on all these formats. The implementations will simply vary according to the capabilities of the individual machine. These games will have set pieces of interactivity, though we're trying for free-format gameplay where ever possible. You can have both in one product. We should be shipping our first CD-ROM product in early 1992."

The World at your fingertips

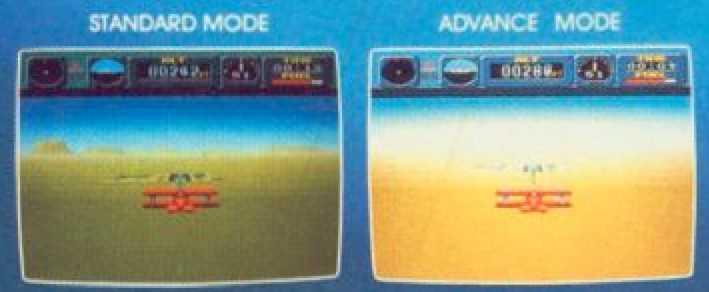
Super Famicom-Fun For All The Family

Nintendo
SUPER FAMICOM
POWER
EJECT
RESET
SELECT
START

The Super Famicoms incredible potential has now been taken a step further into a fantastic world of graphics, game play and sound.

Advance Console Entertainment offers an easy entry into this domain with a recognised performance upgrade known as the 'Advance Colour Enhancement'.

Due to the incorrect display of colour and sound on the standard PAL I and Scart modified Super Famicom you can now with the use of the modified CH1-CH2 switch (found at the back of the machine), select between the standard mode and the Advance Colour Enhancement mode for what is ultimately a stunning difference.


STANDARD MODE ADVANCE MODE

Thanks to a dynamic research and development team providing up to the minute technology with high performance products, Advance Console's Super Famicom is surely superior to any other.

The Advance Colour Enhancement mode is exclusively designed by, and available only from, Advance Console Entertainment.

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Spirit of Excalibur

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Knights and lords, wizards and clerics of the court of Camelot are yours to befriend and command. Interact with peasants, warriors, maidens, nobles and bandits improving their abilities and skills as you go.

features:

- More than 2.5 megabytes of dazzling graphics
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- Zoom from map level down to individual towns and cities
- Hundreds of hours of play-time
- PC version supports Roland MT-32, Covox, Adlib and CMS sound boards

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IBM PC VGA SCREEN SHOTS SHOWN

Virgin GAMES IMMACULATE CONCEPTS

letters

Send your letters c/o Jim Douglas Priory Court, 30-32 Faringdon Lane, London, EC1 3AU.

EASY PCs

What is it exactly that you have against PCs? I am tired of reading ridiculous comments like "When was the last time you saw a good shoot-em-up on the PC?" (ACE 43) or misleading statements saying that a good games PC costs several thousand pounds (ACE 44). And then of course there is the completely incorrect PC information in the Pink Pages.

Are you afraid that people will realise the PC is actually quite cheap and is a far better games machine than the Amiga. Or What?

My 16MHz 286 has VGA, Monitor, 40Mb hard disk and an AdLib sound card, yet it cost me less than £100. (And let's face it, nobody who plays games buys a PC less powerful than that these days).

Does £1000 sound like a lot? Well how much do you think that configuration would cost for an Amiga? My PC is superior in EVERY way to an Amiga, and I know what I'm talking about because I play on one of my friend's Amiga's every week.

Also, there are plenty of good shoot-em-ups on the PC. My own favourites are Thunderstrike, Xenon II and Wing Commander. in particular, Xenon II is so fast as to be completely unplayable unless I turn off my Turbo switch. Even then it runs significantly faster than the Amiga version.

This proves the statement which you seemed to ignore in Chris Low's PC Power letter - sheer processing power more than compensates for lack of hardware sprites.

I know it must be hard for you Amiga fans to accept that your favourite machine has been superseded in every respect, but why don't you just stop the sour grapes and accept the fact?

M Goodall
North Yorkshire

We're far from biased toward the Amiga. Indeed, we're continually being criticised by Amiga owners for always singing the praises of machines just like yours. Space Quest IV, one of this month's featured games is only available on PC at present, and it's the VGA graphics and excellent storage capacity of the machine which makes it work. And Falcon III, this month's cover story no less, is on which machine? PC.

However, contrary to your opinions, it is possible to play excellent games on an entry level Amiga system (£600 with a decent monitor) while by your own admission, PC owners have to spend at least £1,000 on an upgraded machine before they can get started.

And until we see Shadow of the Beast II's parallax scrolling, graphic definition and sprite movement on a PC, we'll have to disagree with your statement about your machine being superior in every way.

ACE is a multi-format magazine, and I wish individual owners would wake up to the fact that we are inevitably going to print favourable opinions about machines other than their own.

CAUSE FROM CONCERN

Firstly, I would like to say how much I agreed with Mr Mussons letter in the april edition. but perhaps the software companies stand to gain more than they loose through this practise of advertising before the game has been completed. By getting magazines to review unfinished copies, it means that things that the company have no intention of fitting into the final game can be used to describe it under the label "specifications subject to change". This way, it increases public anticipation, when in reality, the game might not be as good as promised, thus falsely boosting sales.

This point leads on nicely to my second point. I am very disappointed by Anco, and their Kick Off series. Can someone please tell me how Mike Singleton can create a whole world in 3D with freedom of movement throughout and yet, after four versions/updates Anco still cannot provide visibly different pitches, and linesmen/refs on a standard ST?

This relates strongly to my first point. The adverts for Kick Off 2 showed screen shots portraying linesmen and different pitch surfaces. The "sneak preview" reviews told us these would be available. I rushed out to upgrade to KO2 and was disappointed by the results. Now the Final Whistle is being advertised , and when I picked up the box, lo and behold, these features are still only available on the expanded Amiga.

Something has got to be done about the standard in the software business. If software houses lost vast sums when their advertising went out too early, they would not allow it to happen. They must be reapons some kind of benefit, and if it is as I have suggested above, it is a breech of trust between the companies and their customers.

R.D. Davies
Nottingham.

Sorry to disappoint you, but the software industry isn't quite the crooked back-hand conspiratorial den of iniquity you seem to think. Early ads and late games are unfortunate accidents, and missing levels/features are more attributable to lack of time and memory than a desire to hood-wink innocent Joe Punter. If you've got a real greivance, I'm sure Anco would be pleased to try and sort it out.

CART TRICKS

On the subject of consoles, I myself own a Sega Megadrive and a Nintendo Gameboy, and I want to express my annoyance at the lack of quality software available for the Megadrive.

Why oh why do Sega insist on churning out shoot em ups time after time. Don't they realise that once you've played one or two you've played them all?

Apart from the high price asked by all the games manufacturers for megadrive cartridges, I feel that the originality in games design has gone down hill. I beliece that the Megadrive is being sole solely on graphic capabilities and not playability.

To give an example, the best games at the moment are John Madden's Football and Mickey Mouse. They both have great graphics and playability where as Tructon, Demon Wing ect, have good graphics and that "played once, put it to the back of the shelf" type playability.

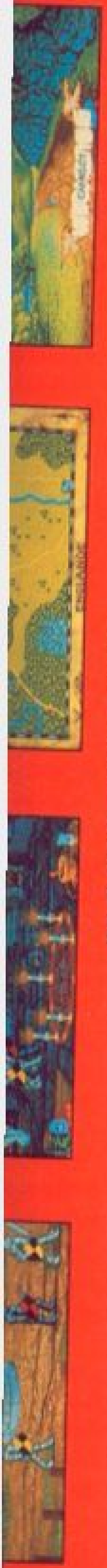
I feel that games manufacturers could at least try, why not look at previous games from older machines and see if they can recreate the great addictiveness and playability values.

I bet that loads of older games could be "dug up" updated and re-marketed on the new line of high quality consoles.

If not as a single game, then as a compilation, how about a compilation of old ULTIMATE games or HEWSON games (somebody must hold the rights, even if the company has gone bust).

I don't expect work to stop on design of new games or arcade conversions, but I feel there is a hole in the market where originality and playability are being left behind. So come on games manufacturers. Let's go back to the days when you didn't mind spending x pounds on a game because you got more than a month's play out of it rather than 3 hours most games offer these days.

M. Pilgrim
Worksop


IBM PC VGA SCREEN SHOTS SHOWN

How right you are! We feel there's a lot of scope for improving and upgrading old classics to maximize the capabilities of both 16 Bit and console machines. Now there's an idea for a feature...

THE LESS, THE MORE

I am writing to you about some things I think are missing from the magazine. I think ACE is ace, but there are a couple of improvements which could be made.

1) Please, please, please cut down on the amount of writing you bung on a review. I love reading about it but there is far too much to read. And don't say that I don't have to read it, because the more writing there is, the more I want to read about the game.
2) Can you lengthen the letter pages. 3 pages would be good.
And to finish off my point, can the letter writers please stop complaining about the mag. It is brill.

L McNeill
York

Glad to help on one count. You'll have already realised, I'm sure, that letters are three pages long this month. However, it's entirely driven by the amount of interesting correspondence we receive; you write 'em and we'll print 'em.

Text in reviews? Well, we feel we've got the balance pretty much there. Any less and we couldn't do the games justice.

ALIEN 3-D

During a conversation about VR headsets, a suggestion cropped up regarding VR television. Imagine that TV pictures were broadcast so that they could be viewed using the headset. Pictures would appear in perfect 3D. It would be like actually being there. Also, using NICAM digital stereo (of CD quality) it would also sound realistic.

It wouldn't be too difficult to flim; simply requiring two slightly offset cameras as used in the good old 3D films that required blue and red glasses.

Just think of it. Flat, wide-screen TVs would become obsolete. After all, who would want to watch a 2D scene?

Horror and sci-fi films would spring to life. It would be just as though you were in the room with Ripley waiting for the Aliens to arrive! 3D TV would bring a whole new dimension to these types of films (pun intended). Nature programmes would be able to demonstrate things far better than on an ordinary TV. Just imagine if they strapped a camera onto the front of a Formula One car - experience the same as Mansell! Or football - just like being on the terraces!

However, I could envisage problems. Only one person could watch a set at a time, proving family viewing to be very expensive. It could also be a very solitary pastime. And the sheer reality of some films could prove very disturbing. If you were being chased by the Alien wouldn't you be worried? New laws governing TVs would have to be introduced to prevent people from watching something too stressful.

We have the technology to make do this so why doesn't someone try to make a 3D TV system? Or has one already been made?

Ian Flory
Banff, Scotland

Hmmm. It's a nice idea, but isn't it underselling the concept of VR to just use it as a high-quality 3D-glasses system? Also, the cost of using two cameras to film would probably make such an exercise prohibitively expensive, at least until a huge user-base was installed.

Far more interesting is the use of VR to actually walk around and interact with a computer-generated environment. But that doesn't mean you can't meet up with your favourite film star. Software routines exist to take two photographs and deduce the intervening animation frames in real time. Thus, by taking a range of images of, say, Sigourney Weaver (maybe stored on CD-ROM), the program could calculate just about any pose imaginable.

This image could then be superimposed on your 3D world, and you could fight the marauding Aliens side-by-side with Ripley. Admittedly the price of such high-power hardware puts it out of reach of the average consumer, but as computer power increases as prices drop, it won't be too long before a workable system will be in the home.

CONVERT!

I'm getting totally &$£!ed off with software publishers. I own an IBM PC and generally speaking most games are available on this format. But, software publishers don't seem to acknowledge the fact that there are PC versions of their games in their adverts. One example of this is Virgin's advert for *Golden Axe*. There is no mention of a PC version, yet the next day I visited my local computer shop and it was there - a PC version of *Golden Axe*! This seems to happen with many games - *Pang, Chase HQ II, Puzznic, Robocop II* to name but a few.

Also, why are some of the major film licences not available on the PC (e.g. *Navy Seals*)? Surely if these films are such big hits Stateside (as claimed by many), they should be converted to America's most popular machine? And what about arcade games?

Finally, why aren't screenshots from all formats on the games packaging, not just the arcade and 16-bit versions, but the 8-bits as well?

Leo Sen
Ruislip

The nature of most movie conversions, especially from Ocean, make them pretty unsuitable for conversion to the PC, hence the Nightbreed Action/Adventure option for PC owners.

UK software companies must cater for the UK market, and research suggests that PC owners are less keen to fork out for a product simply because of its connection to a movie.

As for screenshots on packaging, companies are pretty free to include as many or few as they wish, so long as the overall look gives a fair and reasonable impression to the buyer of the game they will get. The best screenshots are inevitably used because they simply look more attractive - the aim of packaging is to make the product enticing to the potential purchaser, after all.

The cost of producing separate packaging for each version is prohibitive and space on the back of a single box is too limited to devote to relatively unattractive 8-bit shots, they say.

MANUAL LABOUR

I am writing to your magazine in the hope thay my letter will be seen by the software houses.

The cause of my dismay, and the subject of my concern is the quality of many of the manuals which are supplied with current games. All too often these contain the bare essentials needed to pay the game and little else, sometimes a useless little novella is through in so the player has to wade through pages of terrible prose in order to glean a few vital playing hints.

In the worst cases trial and error is needed to work out basic game functions.

Is this minimalist approach to manuals really necessary? Some companies, mainly those with a reputation for high-quality games manage to produce excellent manuals, although it saddens me as a true Brit that these are mainly US companies, eg SSI and Origin. It has been argued that part of the fun of a game is discovering what is possible, but this can become a tedious

WHAT'S THE FUSS ABOUT?

While I agree that Virtual Reality is an exciting concept and has great potential for Advanced Computer Entertainment, I find it very hard to believe that VR will create a gaming revolution.

chore after a while. Some of us players are actually interested in the game mechanics also (eg, the hit probability with weapon X, at range Y with skill level Z) and the wealth of printed matter available for classic RPGs would indicate that gamers wish to know these things. Again, most of SSI's manuals have a section on these very topics. Perhaps, some of the money spent in producing those silly novellas could be diverted to this?

Finally (although this is a personal view) I would argue that a small amount of "factual" information, given in the form of a bestiary, armour descriptions or technical details for objects in the game world make that imaginary world far more real and concrete than any short story.

John Leigh
Tyne and Wear

PRIZE LETTER
PRIZE LETTER

American manuals tend to be superior to their British counterparts for two reasons. 1: The American PC market is desperately competitive, and with products costing upwards of $50, the most easy way to heighten the perceived value of the product (since everyone is claiming amazing sized playworlds and lengthy gametime) is to include some glossy books. 2: The British public are perfectly happy to put up with crappy novellas since, until recently, we haven't had the opportunity to be 'spoiled' with the American bumper-boxes. What you've never had....

However, with Sierra, Microprose and Mindscape heading up the top-end of the UK market, the future is looking brighter.

And I don't feel that the technology used is a great leap forwards, or even particularly 'state-of-the-art'.

Both the hardware used and the software programming techniques involved to create VR (and more specifically the Virtuality system) have been around for a few years. There is nothing new about miniature televisions, quadrophonic sound or filled polygon 3D. It is the combination of existing technology that creates this so-called 'breakthrough', and it is fairly logical that if you stick a pair of mini-TVs over your eyes, attach sensors to your body and link it all to a system running a 3D program you can get Virtual Reality.

I also think comparisons being drawn between VR and the Cyberpunk concept of Cyberspace are inaccurate and misleading, as Cyberspace is a direct cimputer link with all the senses, not just sight and sound, where you become totally integrated into the game world and not a casual observer controlling data within the program via fairly basic input devices.

In short, I feel that VR is not quite as important as it is being made out to be, and if the computer industry and the media continue to blow it up out of proportion with hype, many people are going to be disappointed when they finally find out what VR is really like.

Matthew Kearsey
Gravesend, Kent

You gloss over the complexities of a true VR system a little easily. You ignore the fact that these systems adjust your 'world view' according to you movements, generating a true sense of a realistic environment. Also, interaction with the Virtual world is as natural as the real one: to pick up an item you simply move your hand's Virtual counterpart and grasp it. Via tactile feedback you can actually feel the object your holding. Agreed, the Virtuality is a relatively simple VR system, but it's still a huge technical achievement.

Surely the comparisons between VR and Cyberspace are justified? The aim of both is to create a realistic yet artificial interactive environment where the control interface is effectively invisible. True, Cyberspace doesn't require that the user wear sensor suits or goggles, but then again, it's a fictional concept and doesn't actually exist!

MAKE MINE A MEGADRIVE

am thinking of purchasing a Sega Megadrive, but first there are a few questions I'd like to ask you.

(1) Is there any chance of the Megadrive playing the old Sega Master System games?
(2) Is there any chance that the Megadrive will become as popular as the Amiga with any of the big software companies?
(3) Do you think the Megadrive is worth the money that it's sold for?
(4) Is there a chance that Megadrive games will become available in the big high-street stores, e.g. W. H. Smiths, Boots, Woolworths?
(5) Do you think it's best to use mail order for games?
(6) Is the Megadrive capable of producing Amiga-quality graphics and sound?

John Holmes,
Lowestoft

Glad to be of service, John. To answer your questions one at a time:
(1) You certainly can! Sega produce a piece of hardware called the Power-Base Converter for around £25, which will allow you to play any Master System game on your Megadrive. But isn't that a bit like playing a scratched 78 on a Goodman's turntable stereo system?
(2) Everyone seems to be keen to get into console development, especially for the Megadrive, so definitely yes.
(3) That's really up to you to decide. In ACE's opinion the Megadrive is the best console available, and with the recent drop in price to £150 for the Mickey Mouse game bundle, there's never been a better time to buy.
(4) Yes - you should be able to find Megadrive software in places like Dixons right now.
(5) Mail order co.'s are pretty reliable. However, the current economic climate is putting these businesses under a lot of pressure, so stick to the names you know. Even if things do go seriously awry then rest your mind, safe in the knowledge that the consumer is fully covered by the Mail-Order Protection Scheme.
(6) Yes... and no! For sprite-based games (shoot-'em-ups, platform affairs and anything scrolly-shooty) the Megadrive beats the Amiga hands down, but the Amiga's qualities shine through in filled-polygon 3D games and anything requiring complex user interaction.

INDUSTRY ANSWERS

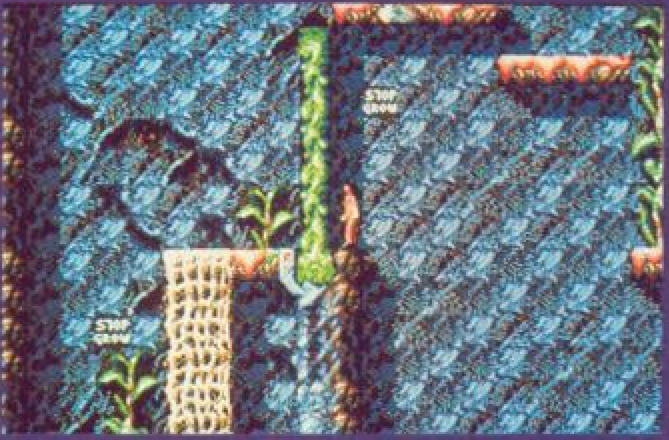
Welcome to a new area on the letters page. Each month, we'll be strapping an Industry Figure into a not especially comfortable armchair and bombarding you with *your* questions. This month's Figure is *Peter Billotta*, Managing Director of Mirrorsoft.

Peter will be ready to answer your queries about Mirrorsoft's games, his hopes for the future, and the industry in general.

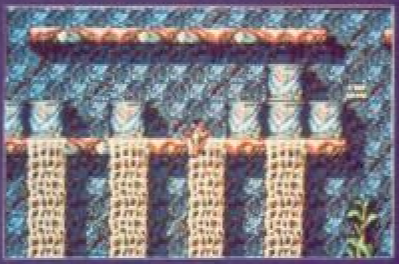
So, if you wonder what the big M has in store once *Predator 2* is on the streets and how they're handling the conversion of *Alien III*, about their ambitions for the CD market, this is your chance to find out for yourself!

Don't be shy! Send your letters to: Peter Billotta Hot Seat, ACE Magazine, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

As MINDSCAPE prepares the first ozone-friendly video game, Rik Haynes wonders if the competition will go green with envy...



Can Captain Planet save the Earth from the unthinking carelessness of the polluters? You, green thumb on your joystick's fire button, must use your arcade skills to help him preserve our planet's natural beauty.



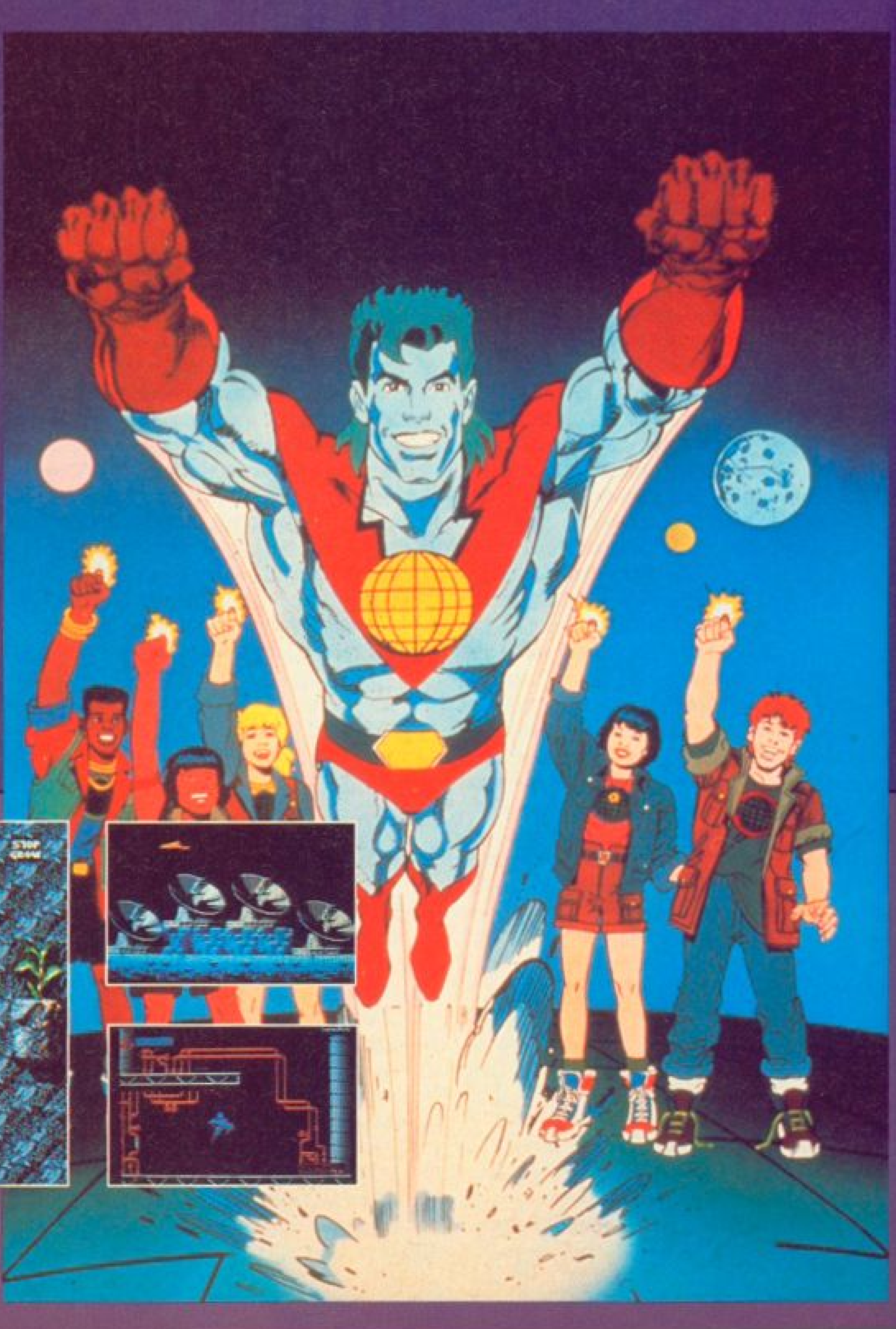
CAPTAIN

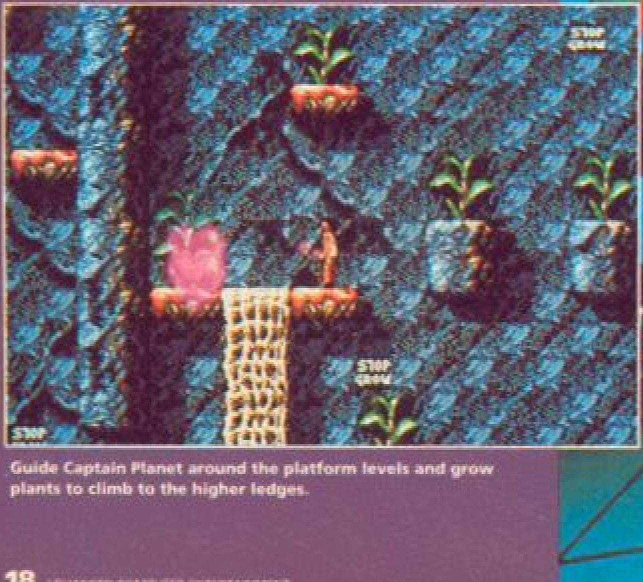
With his spiky green hair and mission to save the Earth, *Captain Planet* is a new breed of comic superhero. Gone are the shark-repellent Batspray and chocolate-anchovy pizzas of previous crimefighters. This Turtle-buster uses totally natural ingredients like Earth, Wind and Fire. American children no longer cry-out 'COWABUNGA' in wanton aggression. No, they're too busy rescuing Mother Earth from uncaring humans.

The same thing could happen to British pre-teenagers now the *Captain Planet* cartoon series is being shown during a prime-time slot on TV-am every Saturday morning. And, no big surprise, a software company is currently working on computer and console games based around Captain Planet. Let's just hope Mindscape doesn't give us recycled gameplay!

THE STORY SO FAR...

Gaia, the worried spirit of Earth, sends magic rings to five youngsters from around the globe – Wheeler (North America), Linka (Soviet Union), GI (Asia), Kwame (Africa) and Ma-Ti (South America). These are Gaia's team in the battle against the further destruction of the Earth. Each has the personal power of Earth, Fire, Water, Wind and Heart.





Guide Captain Planet around the platform levels and grow plants to climb to the higher ledges.

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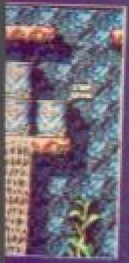
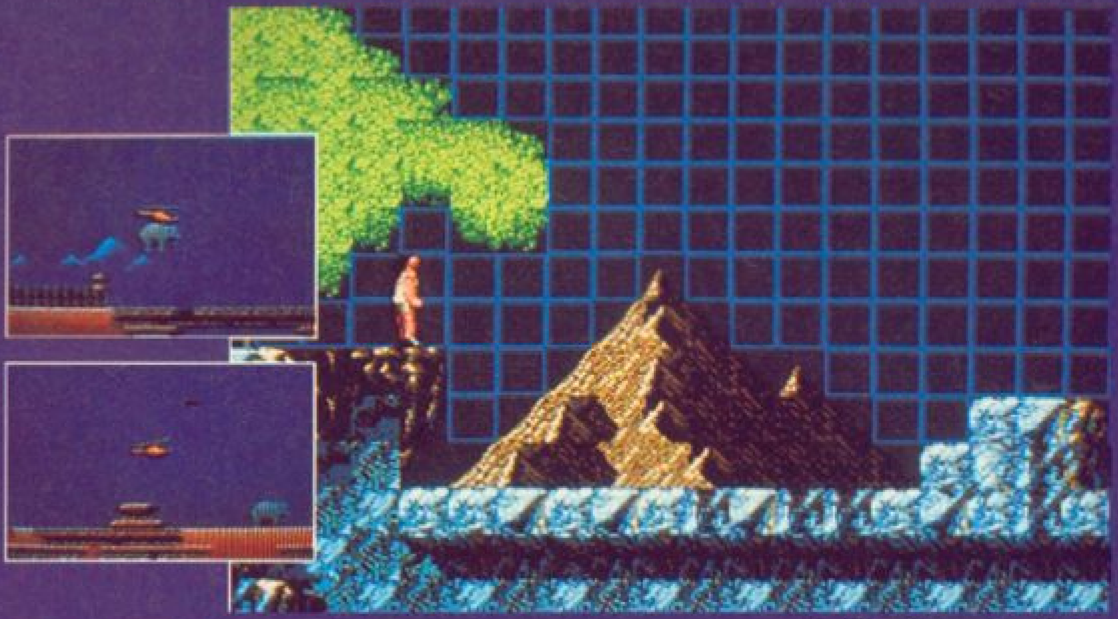


> "Our children can inherit a legacy of wastefulness, or an action plan that can save our planet. That is why we created Captain Planet."
>
> **Ted Turner**
> **Chairman of Turner Broadcasting System**



More platform antics. Don't worry about that blue grid in the background - it's just a guide to help in slotting together the graphic blocks.

PLANET

When the Planeteers join together the names of these five elements, beams of light shoot from their rings and a new superhero literally bursts from the ground. Captain Planet is endowed with the combined powers of the rings and, thankfully, a sense of humour. Ol' blue skin isn't indestructible, though. If Captain Planet is exposed to pollutants – such as acid rain, toxic waste and smog – his powers are temporarily weakened and he must return to the Earth to 'recharge'.

Together, Captain Planet and the Planeteers battle the preposterously named eco-villains Hoggish Greddly, Verminous Skumm and Looten Plunder who are looting and polluting the Earth. Despite lots of action and excitement, nobody actually gets seriously hurt. There's always a happy ending and an epilogue showing kids how they can save the Earth in true *Blue Peter* style.

WHAT'S IN A GAME?

In an effort to cope with the varying tastes of console and computer gamers, Mindscape has commissioned two veteran games developers from both sides of the Atlantic to handle the adaptions.

Chris Grey, the Canadian creator of *Boulderdash* and *Infiltrator*, is writing the Nintendo Super Famicom and NES console versions of *Captain Planet*.

Mindscape's decision to use Tony Crowther on the computer counterparts comes as little surprise. This self-confessed workaholic has programmed more games than even he can remember. *Captive*, his first project for Mindscape, not only scooped a myriad of prestigious awards but started a partnership which looks set to continue for quite some time. Who else could concurrently develop games based around *Knightmare* and *Captain Planet?* In his spare time, Crowther is also devising a sequel to *Captive*. Does this man ever sleep?

Like the TV-show, both *Captain Planet* games tackle the planetary problems of endangered species, destruction of the ozone layer, toxic waste dumping, deforestation, ocean pollution and the greenhouse effect. And that's where the similarity between them ends. Grey has opted for a very visual shoot'em-up with Geo-Cruiser, Eco-Copter and Eco-Sub vehicles. Crowther thinks this Canadian coder has missed the whole point. "I don't like the Nintendo version," he reveals, "It's just another shoot'em-up. There's nothing new in it whatsoever."

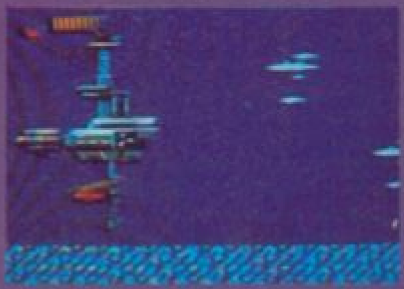
Instead, Crowther is programming a cute platform-inspired arcade game along the lines of *Super Mario Bros* and *Rainbow Islands*. For instance, in one of the six levels players must grow trees in order to reach safety at the top of the screen. Eco-monsters then come along and try to chop these trees down. "I don't want to kill anyone in *Captain Planet* because it's a Greenpeace-type thing. The first action players do in the Nintendo version is shoot down helicopters," states Crowther. Perhaps this symbolises Earth vs planet-destroying machines?

Returning to the 'good-old' days when he wrote games in under 10 days, Crowther designed his interactive interpretation of *Captain Planet* in a matter of hours and plans to completely finish the Amiga adaption within five weeks. Will the game suffer due to this short development time? "Nope, there's already far more than I originally wanted anyway," asserts Crowther, "I've put hidden bonuses in there. In certain areas, players will be able to collect cans for extra points." This Sheffield-based programmer isn't foolhardy enough to take everything on. The animation sequences and sound are being created elsewhere.

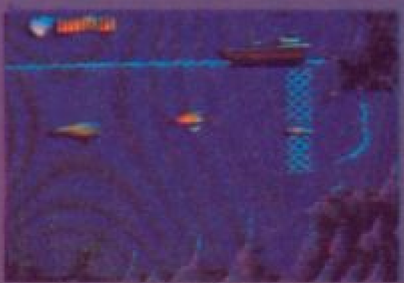
"I never liked the cartoon series to be honest," he says, "It certainly looks like it's going to be very big. Somebody is going to be very rich at the end of it."

SAVING THE EARTH

Captain Planet and the Planeteers action-adventure television cartoon series comes from the same company that brought us those disturbing CNN satellite-TV newscasts during the Gulf War. Remember the scene when that ill-informed reporter thought he could smell gas and panicked? The Atlanta-based Turner Broadcasting System seems to put a little more effort into getting the facts right with _Captain Planet_, a co-venture with DIC Enterprises. Signs of laughable American 'superiority' and overall smugness still manage to creep in. "For most of us, saving Earth's precious resources has not had the priority it should have. We are just waking up to the fact that the planet itself is an endangered species," proclaims Chairman Ted Turner. "Everyone, no matter how young, has the power to help. The power is theirs if we give it to them." As you've probably guessed, viewers are therefore treated to a simplistic lesson in DIY planet-saving at the end of each show. Perhaps President Bush, and other leaders of not-so environmentally-friendly nations, should watch every episode for some tips!



The Nintendo game is more shoot-'em-up inspired than Crowther's platform-based one.



Stop these fishing trawlers ensnaring the dolphins, those lovable clowns of the sea, in another scene from the NES game.

PLANETARY PERFORMERS

Turner Broadcasting System and DIC Enterprises have managed to attract quite a few stars to provide voices to the characters in their _Captain Planet_ TV-show. In fact, I can't think of any other television cartoon series that has attracted this much talking talent. Whoopi Goldberg plays Gaia and the list of eco-baddies sounds like a bunch of Oscar nominees: Sly Sludge (Martin Sheen), Dr Blight (Meg Ryan), Verminous Skumm (Jeff Goldblum), Mal (Tim Curry and David Rappaport), Looten Plunder (James Coburn), Duke Nukem (Dean Stockwell) and Zarm (Sting).

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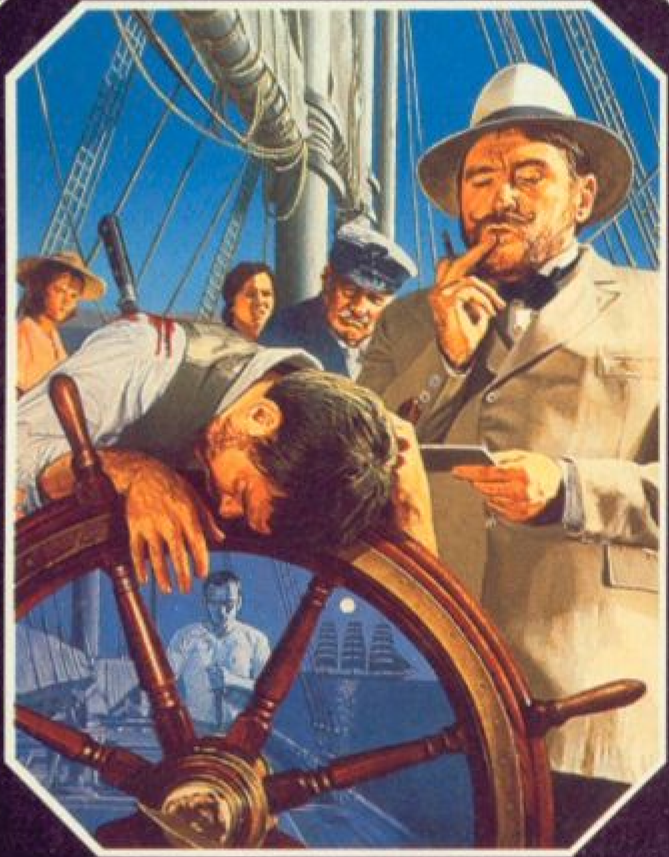

Screen shot from CBM Amiga.

Based in the 1920's, Inspector Raoul Dussentier is aboard a ship in the Mediterranean. But no sooner has the cruise begun when Raoul is summoned to investigate a crime – the murder of his host Niklos Karaboudjan, the Greek shipping magnate. It's up to Raoul to throw some light on this sinister mystery!

- *Wide range of actions, including the option to question other characters in true Agatha Christie style.*
- *PC version features 256 colours, Ad Lib & Roland sonic support.*
- *Amiga version features 32 colours.*

ATARI ST, AMIGA & PC (CGA, EGA, VGA, TANDY AD-LIB & ROLAND).

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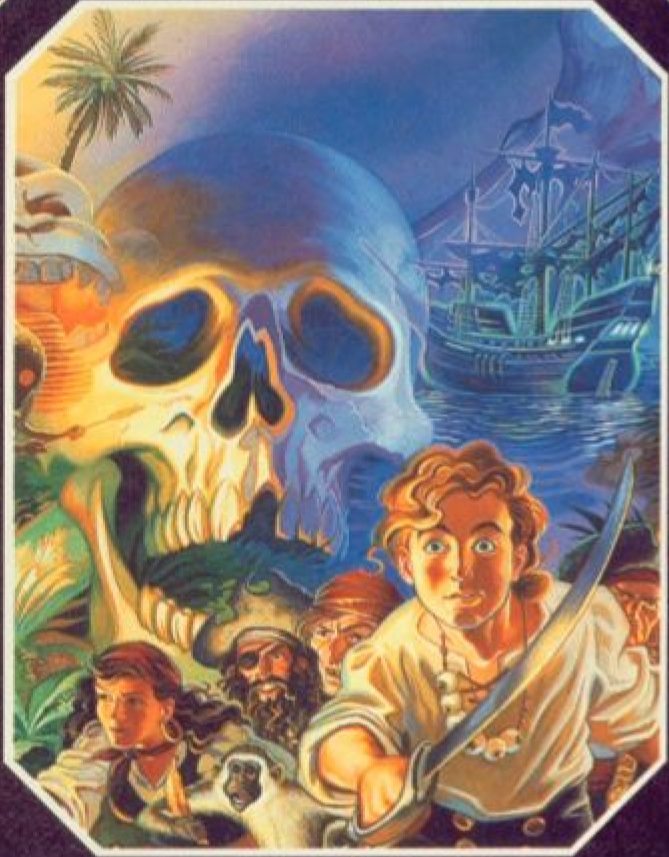
THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND™



Screen shot from IBM PC.

A comedy set during the "golden age" of piracy in the Caribbean. The game's twisty plot leads our hero, fresh from the old world, on an hilarious, complex, swash-buckling search for the fabled Secret of Monkey Island.

- *Features dazzling 3D graphics, an original reggae sound track and a point 'n' click no-typing interface.*
- *A wide variety of original entertaining puzzles, unravel hidden meanings in hilarious repartee.*
- *Proportionally scaled animated characters and cinematic pans and camera angles.*

ATARI ST, AMIGA & PC (EGA, CGA, VGA, MCGA, AD-LIB, ROLAND and MT32 SOUND).

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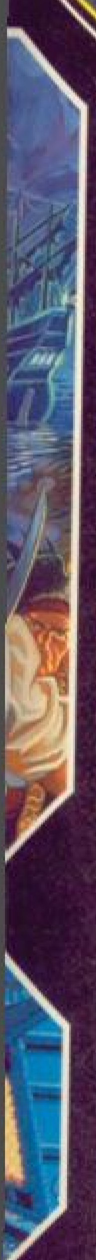

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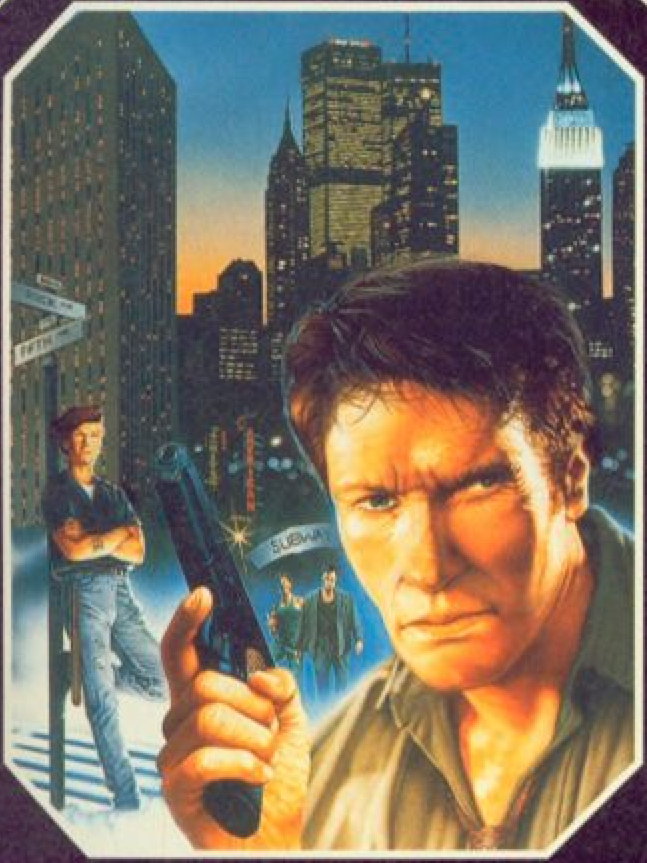
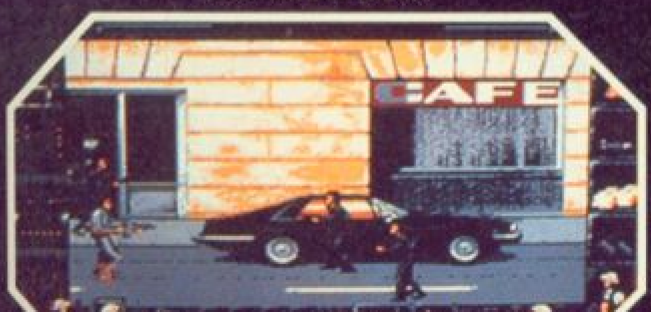


Screen shot from IBM PC.



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A powerful crime syndicate has taken over large areas of our major cities, turning them into a vast criminal wasteland. Arson, extortion, drug distribution and now ... terrorist abduction!

Your purpose: Wipe out the criminal organisation and rescue the President's daughter.

- *More than a "shoot em-up" game. Crimewave contains secret rooms, switches, keycards, different weapons, varying levels of difficulty along with a variety of other strategy elements that provide endless hours of challenge and excitement.*
- *A multitude of brilliant 256 colour scrolling game screens.*
- *Incredible digitalised "Motion Graphics" (featuring real actors and models).*

ATARI ST, AMIGA & PC (EGA, MCGA, VGA, TGA and REAL SOUND™).

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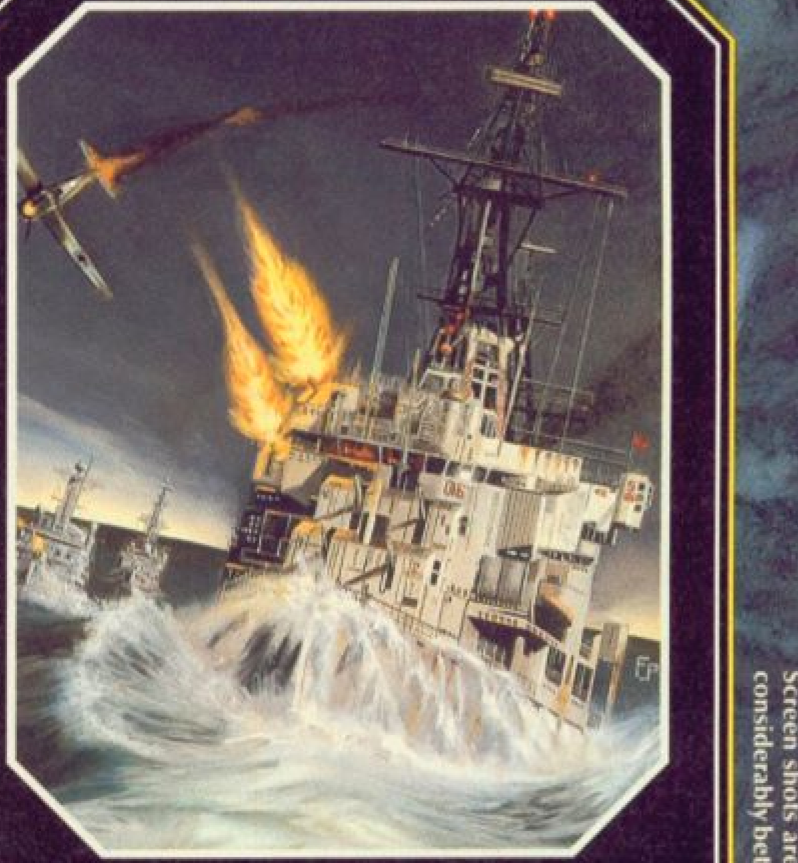
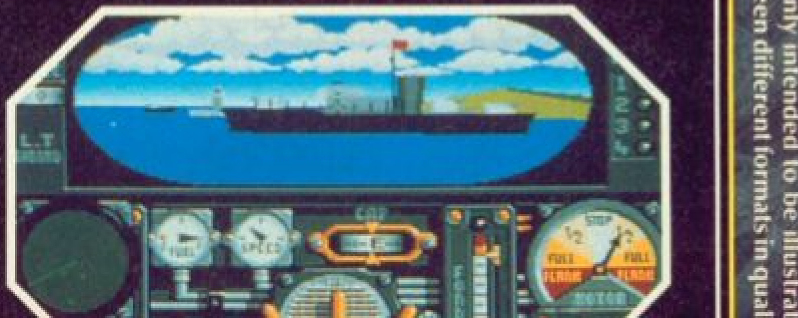


Screen shot from CBM Amiga.



It's World War II – the naval forces of the world are waging war in fierce and unrelenting sea battles ... You must command the destroyer and succeed in beating naval and air forces in 15 challenging missions.

A.D.S. is a stunning sea battle simulator using 3D technology.

- *40 page manual includes detailed maps of the combat zones together with historical and technical information.*
- *Adjustable difficulty level will suit all levels of player.*

ATARI ST, AMIGA & PC (EGA, CGA).

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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the game play and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications.

ACE EXCLUSIVE FROM NEW YORK

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LASER VISIONS

Sony video games, you've got to be joking! That's what Rik Haynes thought, until he spoke to the President of Sony Electronic Publishing...

A popular preconception is about to be smashed. Video gaming is no longer the pursuit of spotty male teenagers playing *Space Invaders* till the early hours of the morning. When a household name like Sony actively gets involved, you know video games are a format whose time has come.

"The demographics of video games are changing – females and adults are getting involved too," confirms 29-year-old Olaf Olafsson, President of the newly formed Sony Electronic Publishing. Based in the never-sleeping sprawl of New York, this subsidiary of Sony Software Corporation has been specifically set-up to create, produce and distribute interactive and multimedia entertainment and software information products.

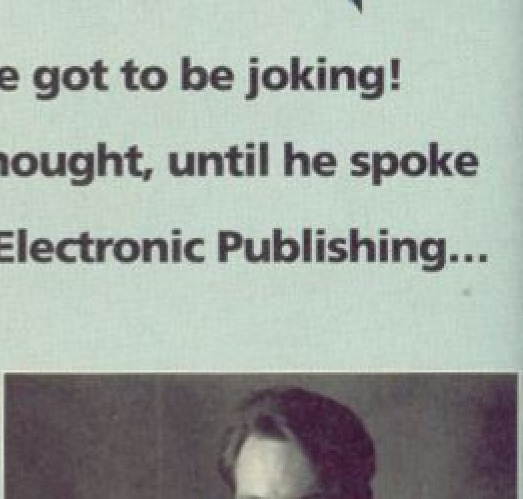
Olafsson adds: "We're trying to achieve a wider audience through a combination of technology and more exciting programs."

The global entertainment giant is aiming for the perfect fusion of software and hardware by reusing the images and music produced by movie and record companies. Not such a crazy idea, when you consider Sony already owns Columbia Pictures Entertainment and Sony Music Entertainment (formerly CBS Records). Hot properties at these two companies include *Ghostbusters*, Gloria Estefan, George Michael and the Sinatra-style crooner Harry Connick, Jr. Not forgetting Michael Jackson, who recently signed a lucrative contract with Sony believed to be worth over $500 million.

You will soon be able to watch the movie, hear the soundtrack and play the game without ever having to leave the 'quality-assurance' of Sony.

Many of the best-selling console and computer games of recent years have been structured around movies. Players have been driving down the streets of Gotham City, getting *Back to the Future* and fighting crime in *Robocop*. Unsurprisingly, software houses such as US Gold, Ocean and Mirrorsoft are putting most of their future chart-topping hopes into the likes of *Godfather III, Terminator II* and *Alien III*. Despite this popularity, the quality of video games based on movies has rarely lived up to the original concept. Will Sony tolerate this kind of failure?

"Our Columbia and Tri-Star studios are very interested in getting more control over how the movies will be exploited in video games. We want to make sure that the quality of the original product is maintained," declares Olafsson.



Olaf Olafsson

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REWIND/REVIEW
OFF

Sony has already made some successful, albeit small, steps into the world of video game development through CSG Imagesoft. Solstice for the Nintendo Entertainment System was the first hit. This arcade adventure game was actually written by Software Creations in Manchester. Olafsson has decided to publish forthcoming video games under a new name, Sony Imagesoft, a subsidiary of Sony Electronic Publishing. He may even start another label, Sony Electronic Entertainment.

Sony Imagesoft is in charge of all video game development. This unit is using a variety of software developers including two European games specialists, Ocean and Software Creations. "I think Ocean has done some very good work. We are confident that they can produce what we've asked them to do," states Olafsson.

Ocean is understandably elated. Software Director Gary Bracey says: "I don't think we could have any greater partner in the consumer electronics industry. Hopefully this relationship will enable us to venture into new areas along with Sony."

The first fruits of this deal will be cartridge and floppy disk games based on two new films from Columbia Pictures. *Hudson Hawk* has Bruce Willis, the star of *Die Hard* and *Moonlighting*, playing a cat burglar who tries to go straight before being forced into stealing some priceless works of Leonardo Da Vinci. *Hook* is a big-budget movie telling the story of a grown-up Peter Pan. The film, directed by Steven Spielberg, has attracted top names like Dustin Hoffman, Robin Williams and Julia Roberts. No wonder the estimated cost of producing the movie currently runs at $60 million!

"We feel *Hook* is a natural for video games," claims Olafsson, "We're making sure that the development of the video game is tied closely to the development of the movie and story. We want to make things as exciting as possible."

ACE has got a feeling that *Hudson Hawk* and *Hook* will be improvements over recent movie-licensed product from Ocean (see our Licence Revoked article on page 60) Bracey told us Ocean will publish the games in Europe while Sony will handle North America and Japan. They will be released later this year on a variety of formats.

"We will support any format that makes sense," Olafsson reveals, "We're not limiting ourselves to any one particular format. We would publish video games on potato chips if it made sense. We have to make sure that we maximise the coverage, so as many consumers as possible can enjoy the games. We have an obligation both to the artist and the consumer."

Sony is also getting into the video game business as a hardware company. "We will be announcing our overall plans for video game hardware in a couple of months," indicates Olafsson. He is probably referring to the recent agreement with Nintendo, whereby Sony is supplying an add-on CD-ROM drive for the Super Famicom console. Industry sources suggest the price of the new drive will be just below ¥100,000 (approximately £400).

Olafsson is less sure about creating 'musical' video games, though. "Today, with current technologies, music doesn't really come across that elegantly. However, once we introduce CD-based video games we open a whole new category of opportunities. We will be working with our music artists once this technology gets introduced."

> "We would publish video games on potato chips if it made sense."
>
> **Olaf Olafsson**
> **President of Sony Electronic Publishing**

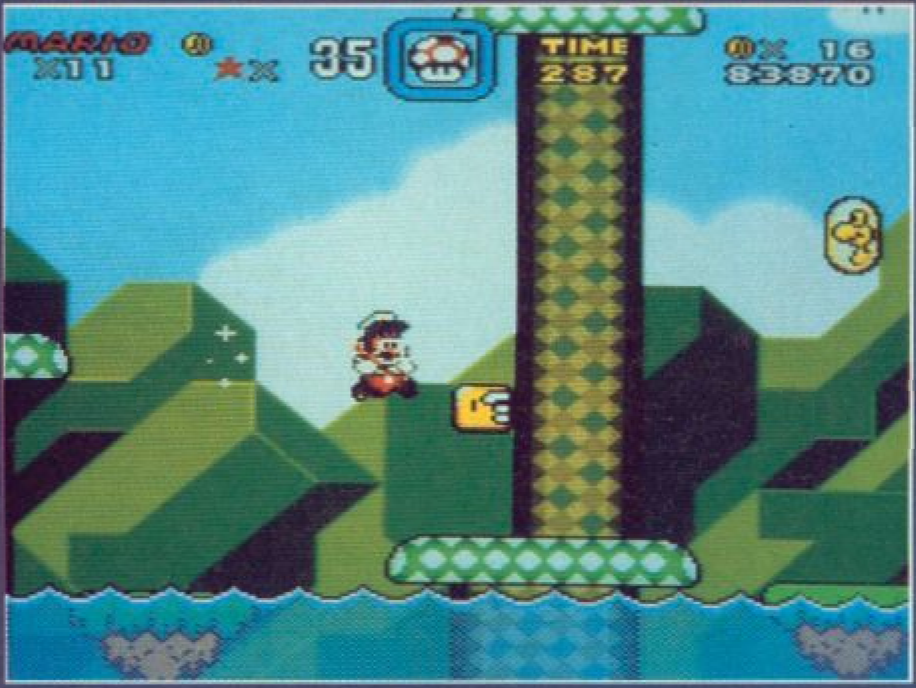
MULTIMEDIA IN THE HOME

This summer Sony will be introducing multimedia to unsuspecting American consumers with the release of a CD-ROM package for the home computer market. "We're attempting to release a hardware product for the IBM PC-compatible with all the accessories you need, like headphones, and six software discs for less than $700 (a little over £400)," remarks Sony Electronic Publishing President Olaf Olafsson. This new multimedia software will break down into entertainment and education titles integrating digitised video, audio, graphics and text. Olafsson will soon announce relationships with a number of different book and magazine publishers. The initial 'CD-ROM for the Home' titles will eventually expand into a catalogue of 40-50 applications including encyclopaedias, sophisticated video games, multi-language dictionaries, interactive audio titles and other reference works. No price or release date has been set for the European launch. Is Sony tired of waiting around for CD-I like the rest of us? "The reason we're going for CD-ROM is very simple. People have been waiting for a 747 with vertical take-off when we have a lot of 727s around. The most important thing is to get you from one place to another. Optimum technology might get you there faster but it's not going to be around for a few years."

WIRED FOR DATA

Data Discman may look like an ordinary portable audio-CD player, it plays the latest CD-single from The Farm without any hint of wobble, but Sony reckons the consumer wants much more than this. That's why this matt black deck is also a portable CD-ROM device with the capability to display dictionaries, novels and travel guides on a small pop-up LCD screen. Already available in Japan, this trendy toy will be released into the USA and Europe before the end of the year. Sony should have 10-20 software titles available at launch. Most of this will be reference-based because of the nature of the product. "We've got all kinds of stuff planned," says Sony's Olaf Olafsson. "Our vision for this thing is very simple and family-orientated. For instance, kids will walk into school with a Data Discman in their pocket and listen to their favourite audio-CD. They can then use it as their personal library – just put an encyclopaedia disc in it and look-up the desired information. We're sure that the Data Discman will have a number of applications in the business world but it is primarily a consumer product. There are a tremendous amount of opportunities."

KING



(Left)
Mario's graphics are cute beyond belief, and although clear, are anything but simplistic. Mario himself has an animation appropriate to every situation.

(Below)
Duck! As Mario ducks to avoid the enormous bullet, he pulls his cap tight over his ears. Note dust trails at his heels.

(Bottom)
While riding Dino, Mario clip-clops along eating his foes.

(Below Left)
Dragon's Lair II. Nice graphics at the expense of good gameplay.

(Above, Middle and Top)
Each stage has atmospheric sounds to complement the music. Moles make shuffling sounds. American footballers punt the balls with thumping sounds and end-of-level monsters have their own dramatic themes.

***Super Mario World* on Nintendo's Super Famicom is arguably the most playable game ever written. But just what is it that makes Mario the maestro? ACE disects the game and explains where Nintendo are going right and where others are going wrong.**

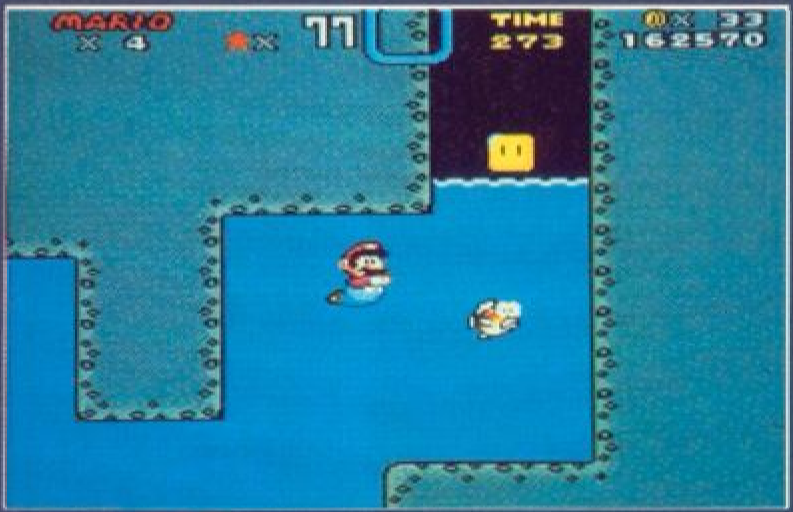
Few games have kept the hardened gamers at ACE addicted as long as *Super Mario World* on Nintendo's Super Famicom. It's vice-like grip over our hearts and minds begged the question: what is it about *Mario World* that makes you want to keep playing? And why do so few other games have that special 'it'?

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

The Super Famicom is a highly-powerful piece of electronics hardware. *Mario World* boasts dozens of flashy visual tricks - fast multi-level parallax scrolling, smooth sprite rotation (as in the *Assault* coin-op), searchlight-like effects, fade-ins and fade-outs - thanks to its graphics chip. The Famicom's sound chip is no slouch either - the echoing effects in the cave levels is proof enough of that.

What really impresses is the amount of thought that's gone into the design of *Mario World* and its inhabitants - there's nothing that jars or looks out of place - and the cartoon-like animation makes the characters instantly appealing and lovable. The care that's gone into the game is exhibited in minor but neat details such as the dust rising from Mario's feet when he skids (also seen in Gremlin's *Switchblade II*), or the way Mario pulls his cap down tight over his head when he crouches.

But anyone who has played *Dragon's Lair II* will tell you that it takes more than pretty pictures and stunning sound effects to make a classic game. As good as *Mario World*'s aesthetic qualities are, they are basically icing on the cake. The game elements that make Mario so addictive and engrossing could just as easily be implemented on an Amiga or ST.



(Left)
While underwater the controls change, and Mario must learn to swim. Holding onto empty turtle shells enables him to move swiftly.

CONTROL

Mario is nothing if not agile. Depending on whether the 'Speed-Up' button on the control pad is held down or not, Mario can jump to various heights and even change direction in mid-flight. This strange physical law peculiar to *Mario World* is vital to the player's enjoyment - in a platform game there's nothing more frustrating than jumping and then realising that you're going to

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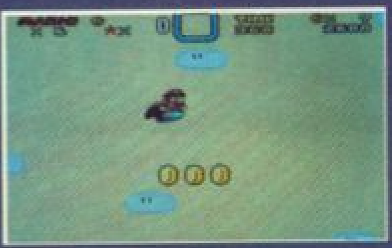
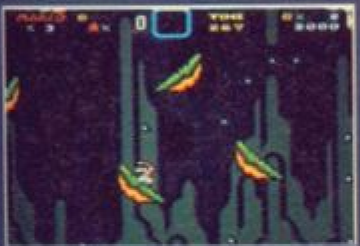
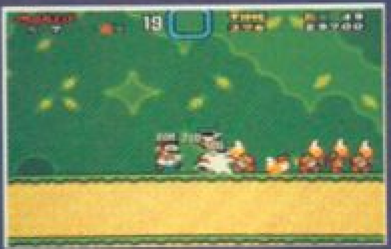
MARIO

land unavoidably in the path of a monster that's just wandered on-screen, a problem that marred the otherwise highly-enjoyable *Car-Vup*.

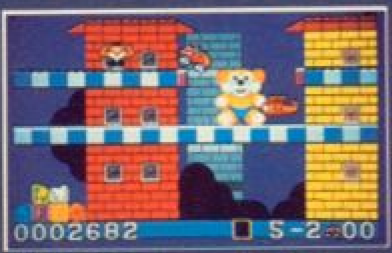
Another major control feature is Mario's inertia. It's a nuisance at first, and novices will find themselves skidding into baddies. However, as the player grows in experience, he or she learns to compensate for it and then use it to their own advantage, especially when in the air, to perform some fancy manoeuvres; twisting and turning, bouncing from the head of one monster onto the head of another. Fans of *Asteroids*-style games like *Oids* and *Thrust* will well know the satisfaction reaped from such complete mastery of the controls.

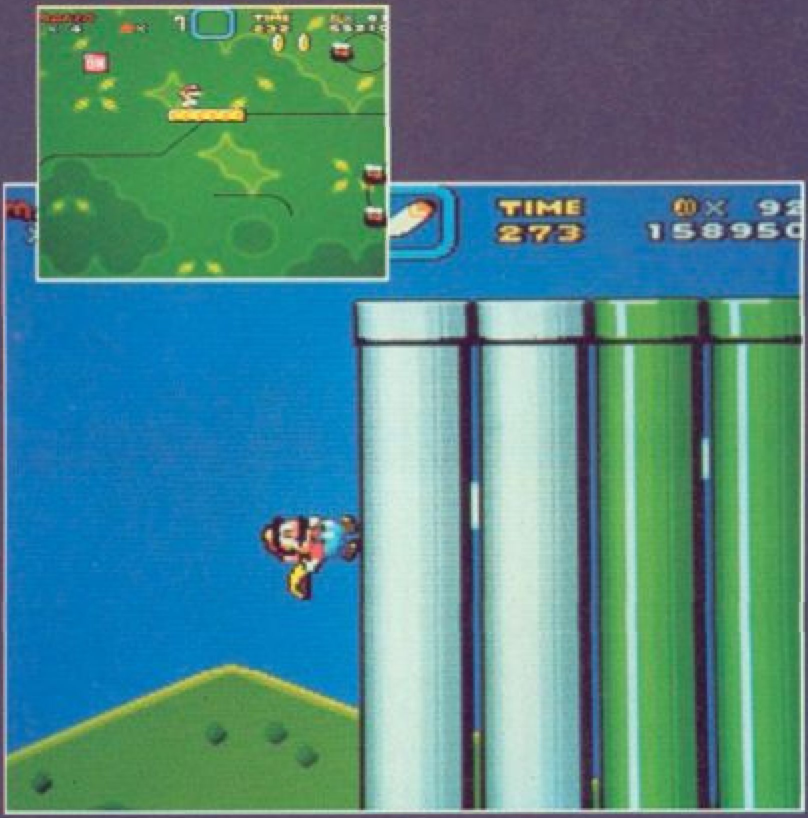






(Far left)
Sliding platforms are a real test of control. Holding down the speed-up button makes for better jumps but less traction on landing
(Left)
In areas such as this, surrounded by sliding blocks, rapid mid-air about-faces are vital.
(Right)
Car-Vup from Core Design. No about-face option here, more's the pity.





(Right)
The variety is immense, offering players a new skill to master for practically every level. As well as the basic control skills over Mario, a host of landscape-puzzles like the moving platforms (top) and the sheer surfaces which must be scaled confront him.

VARIETY

It's the spice of life, they say, and it certainly adds a strong flavour to *Mario World*. As the player progresses through the 100 levels of *Mario World*, he or she is constantly encountering new challenges and having to adjust their playing style to survive. Usually progress involves having to face more and harder-to-kill aliens, whereas *Mario World's* monsters change very little. Instead, it's the game style that changes.

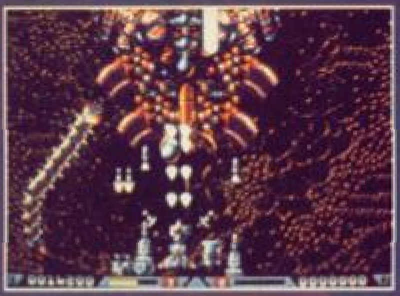
In effect, each level has it's own specific learning curve. Unlike most games where the player is encouraged to play to see what new graphic delights await, *Mario World* entices the player with the lure of a totally different game challenge.

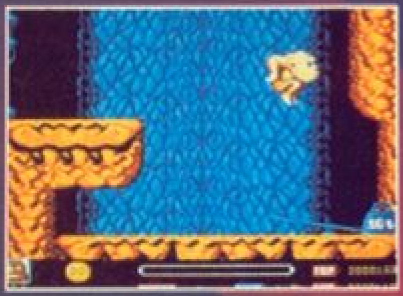
FAIRNESS

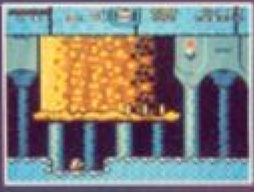
Mario World is never unfair. When you die it's invariably your fault, and not just random chance. Too many games rely on the unexpected to trick the player - a sudden swirl of aliens from the bottom of the screen in *Xenon 2*, a monster appearing from nowhere and dropping on top of you in *Toki*.

These sort of games rely on you learning when these surprise attacks occur and reacting accordingly. *Mario World* nearly always gives you some sort of warning - a wobbling spike means it's about to fall, crushers fall slowly at first then speed up - allowing the deft player to avoid trouble.

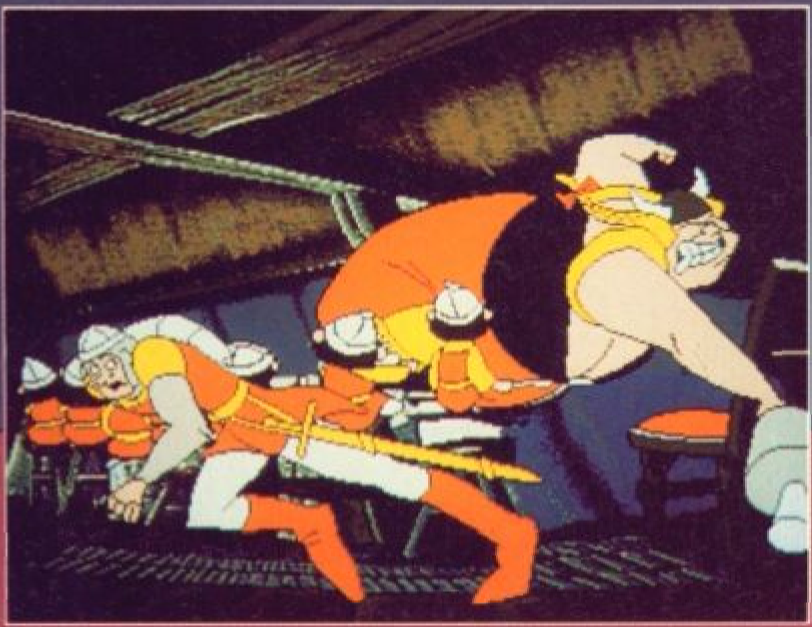
Mario World, although constantly full of surprises, cleverly introduces new game elements slowly. For example, on one level there are platforms with numbers on the side. When Mario stands on one, it starts moving to the right, carrying Mario with it. The number starts to count down, and when it hits zero the platform disappears. When first encountered, these platforms are above solid ground, giving the player a chance to safely learn how they work, but later the platforms will carry Mario over bottomless chasms.

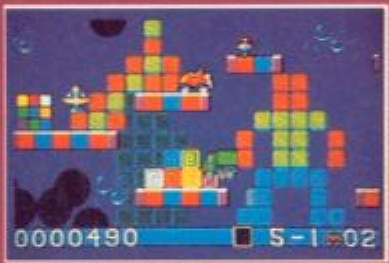


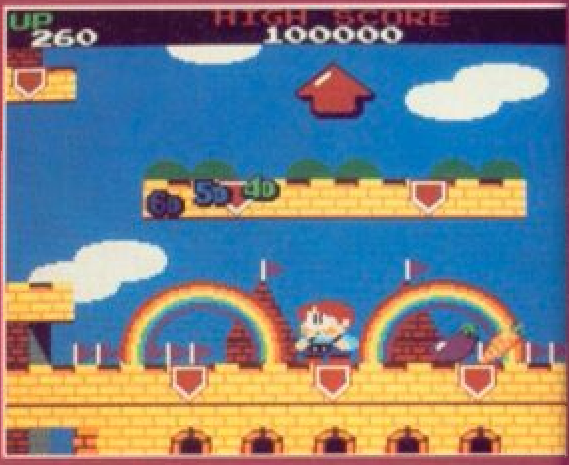


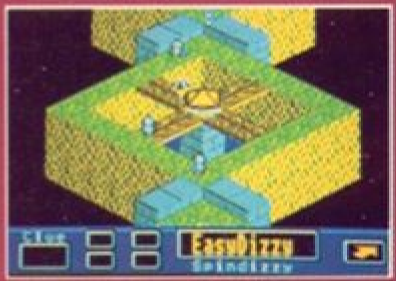


(Top and middle top)
Xenon 2 from Imageworks and Toki from Ocean. Both fine games, but isn't a little unfair to prevent the player making progress by launching sneak attacks.
(Middle bottom)
Even *Mario World* isn't quite perfect. The wizards appear randomly (even on top of you!) and cause huge headaches.









(Top left)
Readysoft's *Dragon's Lair II* is a dream to look at but a nightmare to play.
(Bottom left)
Surprise and avoidable alien attacks carve up *Car-Vup*.
(Right)
Ocean's coin-op conversion *Rainbow Islands* shares many of *Mario World's* finer points.
(Far right)
Gremlin's *Switchblade II* shares many of *Mario World's* neat graphic touches.
(Bottom right)
Activision's *Spindizzy Worlds* allows the player to develop the same degree of satisfyingly-precise control over GERALD as *Mario World* allows over the hero.

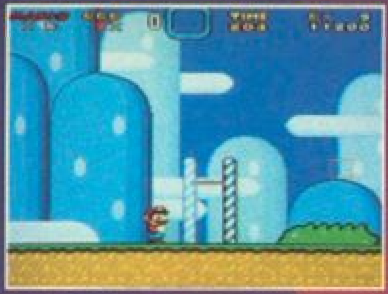
So what's holding other games back? Well, memory is probably the biggest factor. *Super Mario World* can afford to go to town simply because each Super Famicom cartridge can address - instantaneously - an incredible 16 Mb of data.

Compare this to, say, the Amiga. Most games are designed for the basic 512K machine - that's 32 times less memory than the Famicom! Since a decent arcade-like parallax scroll uses up around 150K, you'll begin to see how tight things get.

Memory aside, there's no technical reasons why *Mario World* couldn't convert almost identically to the Amiga (or, to a lesser extent, Atari ST or PC).

Another important point is the amount of development that goes into a Nintendo game. Twenty-odd people are credited with *Mario World*, whereas typically three or four write a UK game. But remember that *Super Mario Bros 3* on the NES has sold over 7 million copies (grossing in excess of $427 million) and compare that with sales of 80, 000 for a top UK game, and you'll realise it just isn't viable to allocate a similarly-sized team.

But console owners shouldn't



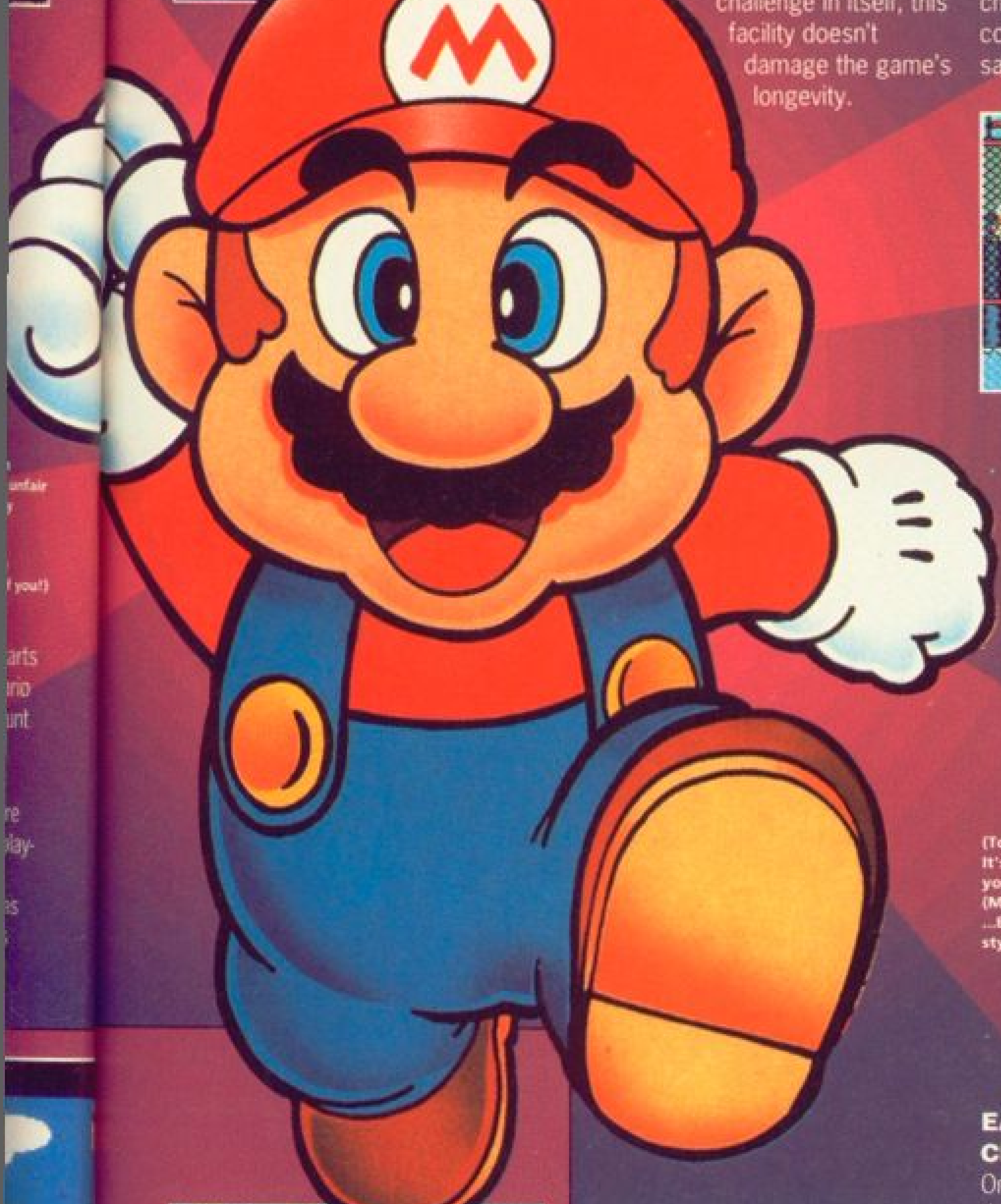
(Left)
A restart point is denoted by a small gate. Each ghost house offers a cartridge-save.

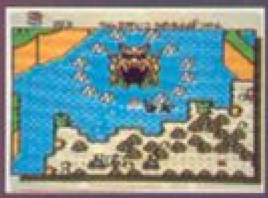
SAVE GAME

After completing certain special levels (typically ghost houses or castles) *Mario World* allows you to save your game. What's more, since you can replay a level once you've completed it once, you can constantly keep saving your game. Since, as described earlier, each level is a challenge in itself, this facility doesn't damage the game's longevity.

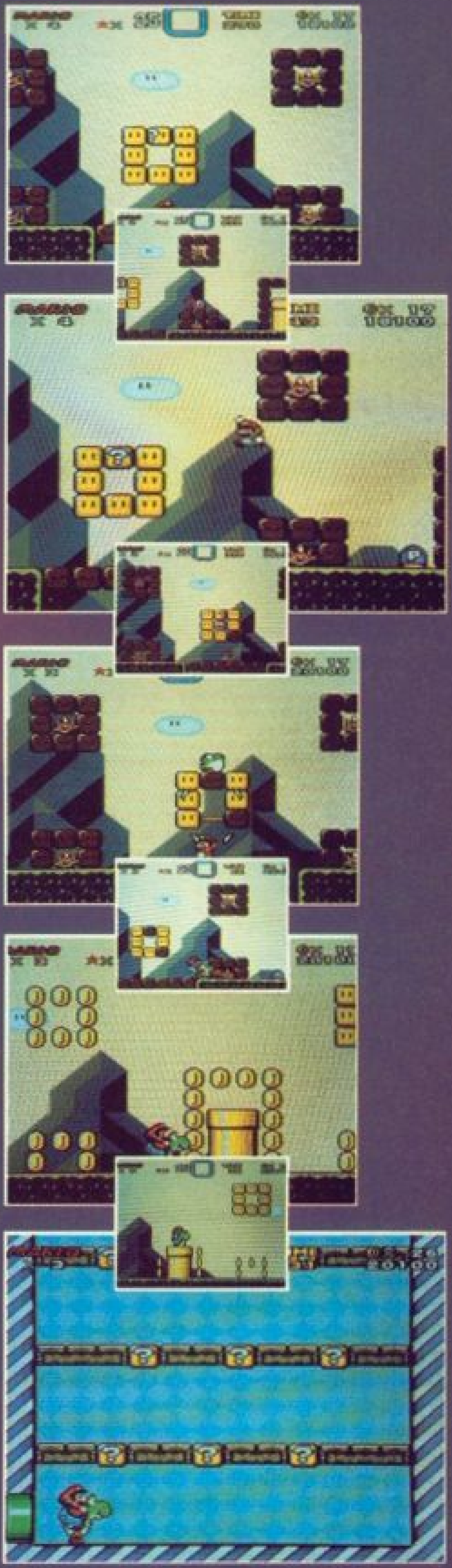
EXPLORATION

Each level of *Mario World* is packed with secret rooms and levels, most accesses by the pipes poking out of the ground. Although *Mario World* boasts 100 levels, it's possible to reach the 'end' having only completed less than half of them. However, the urge to continue playing remains due to the constant challenge posed by each level - completing a level provides enough satisfaction in itself.





(Top)
It's unlikely that you can ever predict what you're going to find in a level...
(Middle)
...But the map offers some clues as to the style of stage you are about to attempt.



Above (top to bottom)
Solving mini-puzzles is one of *Mario World*'s many aspects that keeps you on your toes. Take this scene, for example. Just off-screen to the right is a tube that'll transport Mario to a bonus level. But the entrance is sealed off by indestructible brown blocks! That 'P' pod will turn all blocks into coins and allow you to enter, but it'll also release those deadly spiky turtles and - more importantly - remove the ground from under Mario's feet. What to do?

...You know that the yellow block (marked '?') contains a friendly turtle-eating dinosaur, but if a dinosaur even so much as touches a 'P' pod it'll be activated. So start off by getting the pod well out of harm's way.

...Having thrown the pod onto firmer ground, Mario heads back to the yellow blocks.

...A lucky head-butt reveals a mushroom. Butting the neighbouring block releases it (turning Mario in Super Mario) and also allows Mario to reach the '?' block.

...Out pops an egg, which promptly hatches and reveals the cutest dinosaur you ever saw.

...Mario jumps on Dino's back, and by administering a firm whack to the lizard's head causes it to shoot out a sticky tongue with which it can scoop up the turtles.

...All the hazards removed, Mario can now hit the pod without fear.

...Pushing down on top of the pipe lets Mario slip away to the bonus level.

...The fun's just beginning. Butt those yellow blocks in the right order to reveal an extra life mushroom. Yum!

EASY OR HARD? - YOU CHOOSE

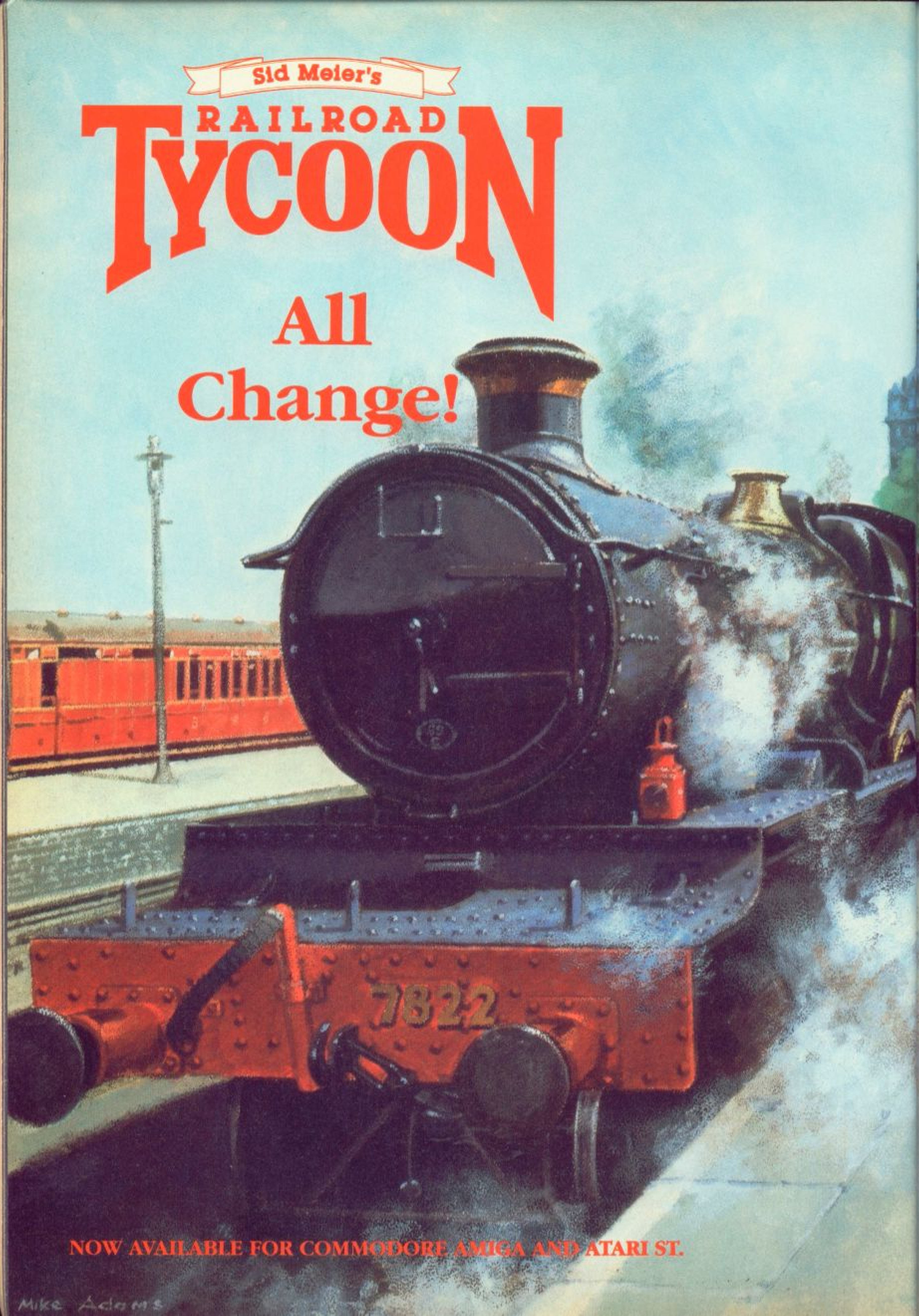
Once a level's has been completed, the player can re-enter it as many times as he or she wishes, and exit at any point. Therefore, if the player finds a level laden with lots of easy-to-get power-ups or extra lives, then it's possible to become as powerful as you wish. Certain levels are easier to play with (or without) certain powers, and the smart player will realise this and capitalise on it.

PUZZLES AND PROBLEMS

One of *Mario World*'s major features are the puzzles and problems it poses the player. While they're not going to keep a hardened adventure game player awake at night, some are sufficiently cunning to provide great satisfaction when solved.

get too smug. A look at the ACE review pages will reveal that consoles have had their fair share of so-so and downright awful games. Sometimes all the memory and developers in the world can't make up for dull ideas, uninspired graphics and unoriginal gameplay!

(Top)
Clearing a bonus room will fill in transparent blocks throughout the world, making it easier to get around.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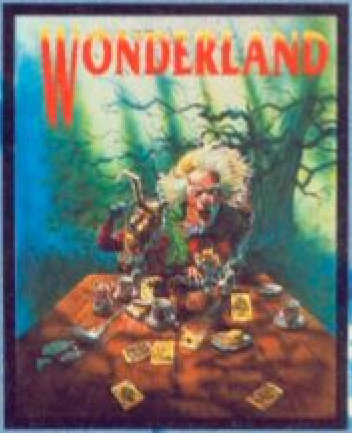

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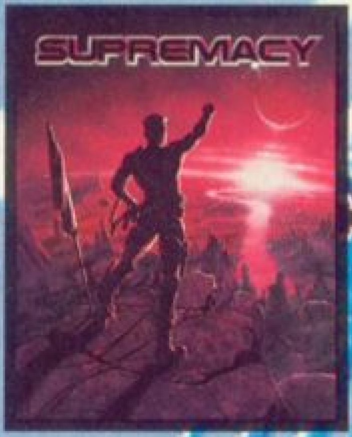

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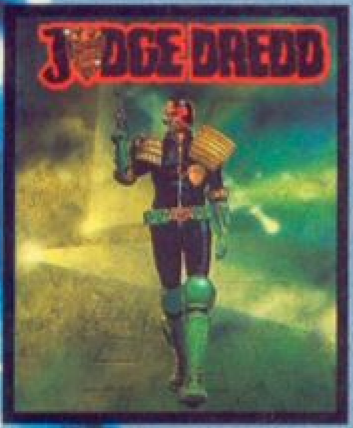

JUDGE DREDD

"Nobody's an innocent citizen – we're just here to determine the level of guilt." Amstrad, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari & C64

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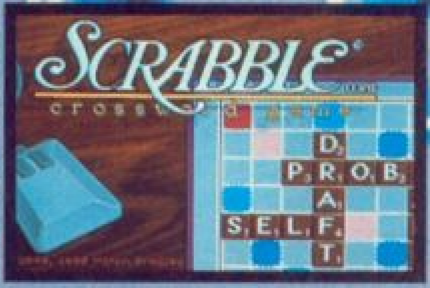

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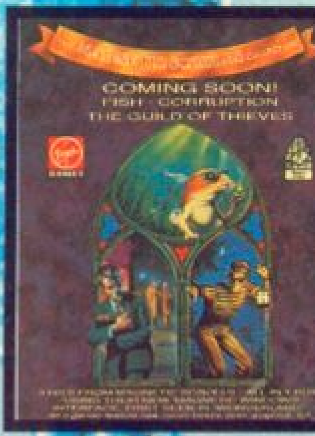
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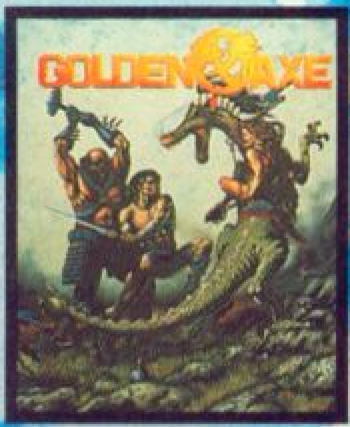

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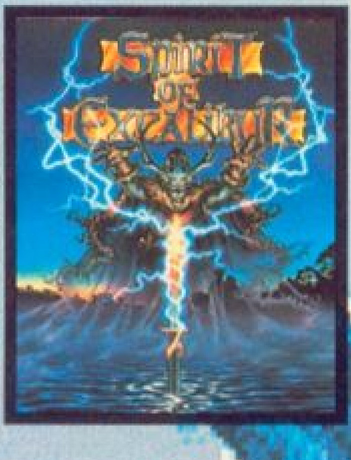
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EXCALIBUR

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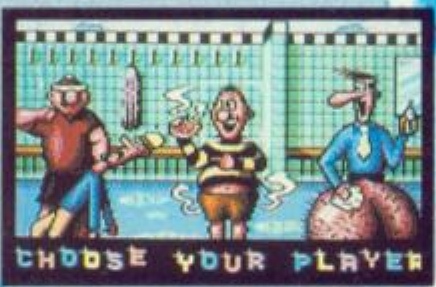
CHOOSE YOUR PLAYER

VIZ

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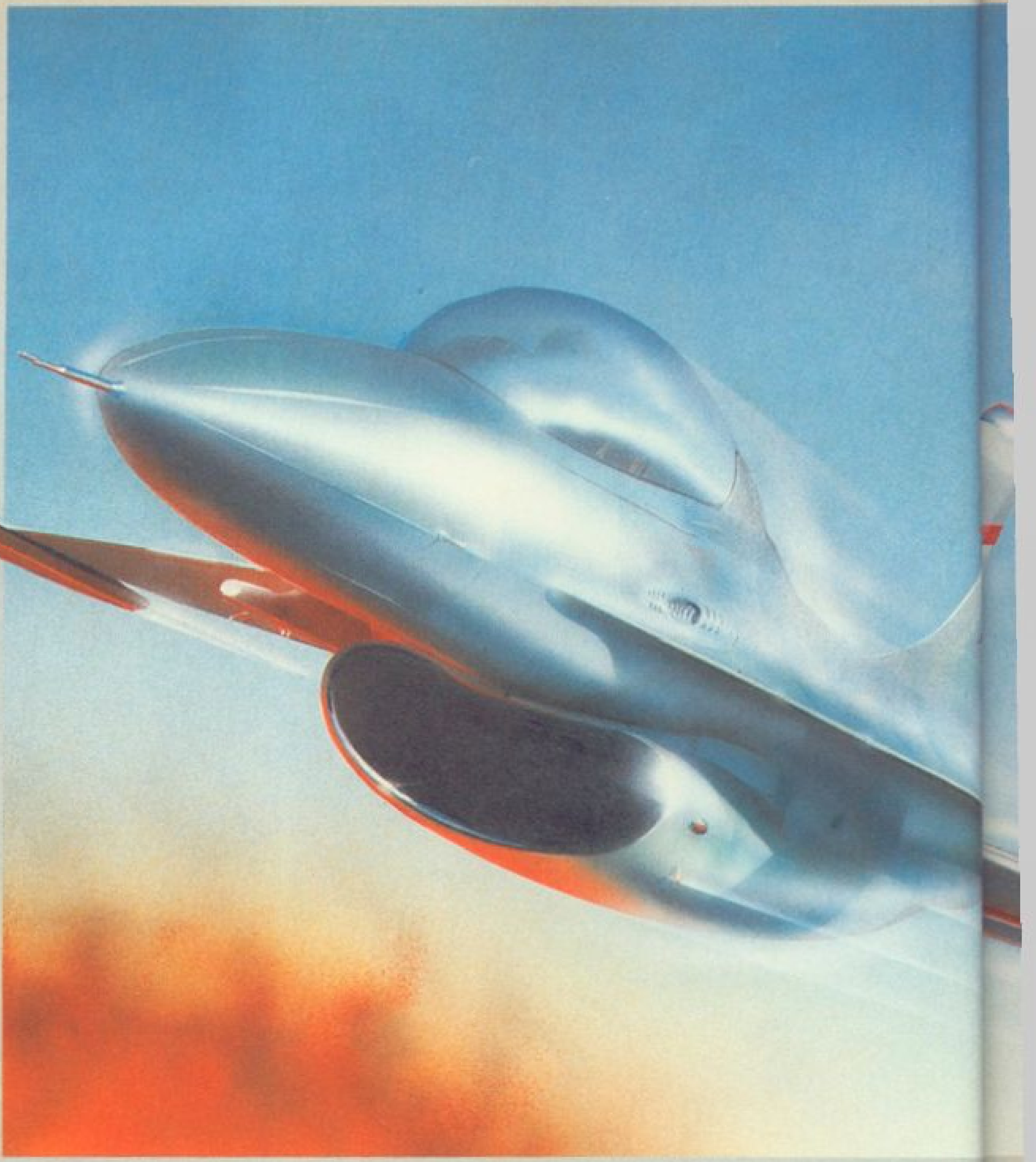


FALCON FANTASY

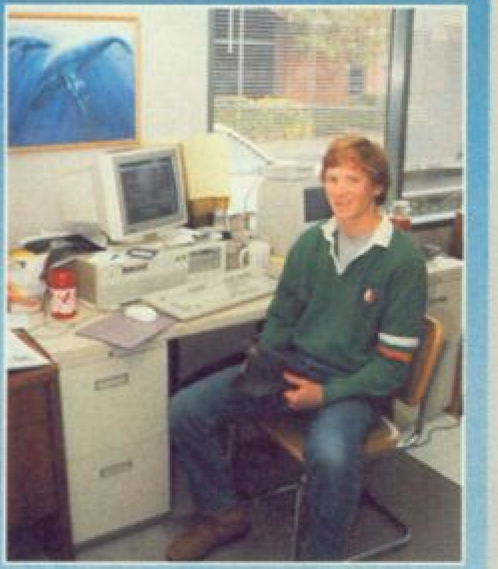
Spectrum Holobyte's new game system allows players to do battle with each other *while playing different games!* By Steve Cooke

The men responsible for coding one of tomorrow's heavy-weight contenders in the flight sim championships: (l/r) Ian Falicov, Kuswara Pranawahadi, Erick Jap, and Gary Stottlemyer

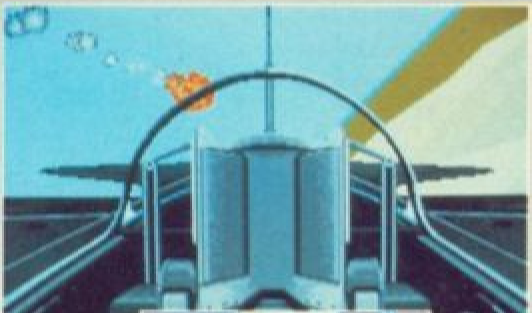
Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon has been sky-storming in silicon for almost as long as General Dynamics' real-life F-16 has been firing up afterburners. Once the undisputed king of 16-bit flight sims, the game's supremacy has come under ever increasing fire from more recent releases and nowadays only a particularly indulgent fan could give it a sporting chance against the combined weight of Jet Fighter 2 (see next month), F-16 Interceptor or even F29.

Undaunted, Spectrum Holobyte are about to launch another mission against those who dare to intrude upon their air space. The release of Falcon 3.0, scheduled for early June, is the first sortie in an astonishing assault on the military simulation market – not just because of the quality of the game, but because it revolves around a whole new multi-player concept: the Electronic Battlefield System.

EBS has been three years in the making – most of which was spent on steady refinement of the concept rather than actual coding. It's going to be firing salvoes at several different targets; not only

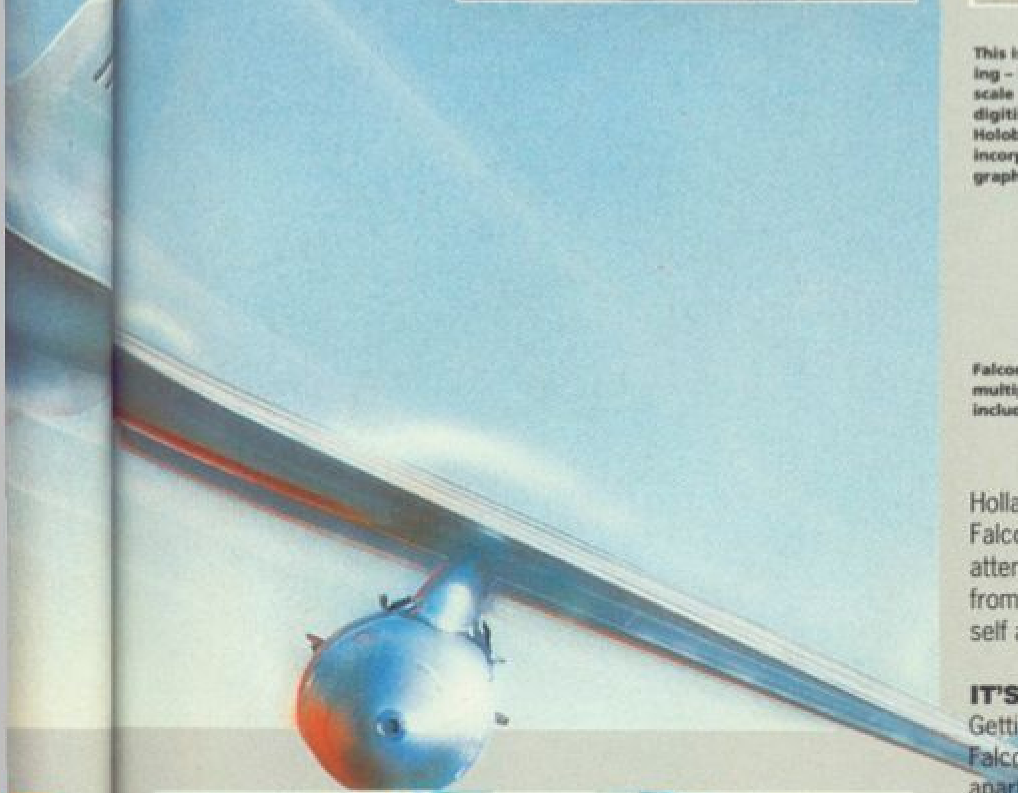


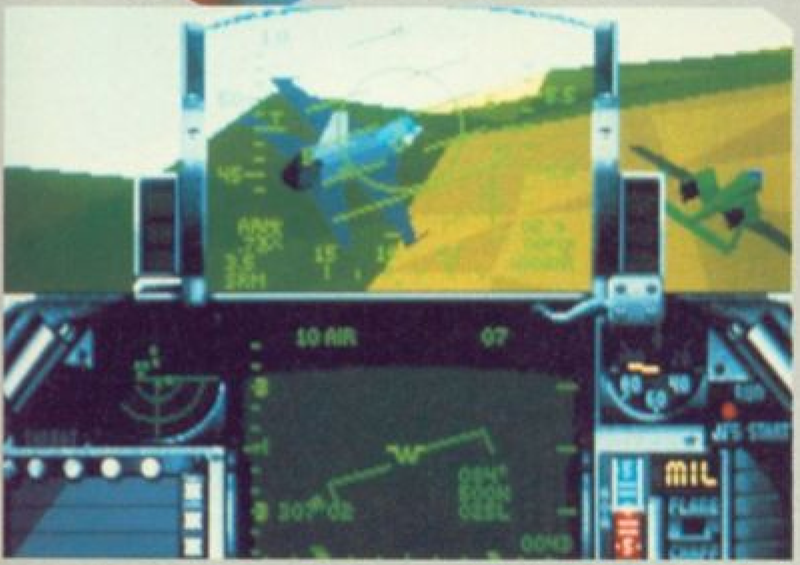
This is the plane you'll be flying – literally. It's one of two scale models that were digitised by the Spectrum Holobyte graphics team and incorporated into the game graphics



Falcon 3.0 offers all the usual multiple view facilities, including instant replay

The six main sections of the game offer you numerous control and management options, including one (Instant Action) that bypasses them all and gets you straight into the sky





will it feature advanced multiplayer capability, but it also allow players owning different Spectrum Holobyte titles to do battle over the same terrain. And, just to lob a final shell at the opposition, it could also be implemented in arcades as well in a special ultra-high resolution version.

The maximum number of participants in an EBS scenario hasn't been fixed yet, but you can be certain it will be a lot more than the traditional two player head-to-head. Falcon 3.0 is the first game to feature in-built EBS capability. The next will be A10 Tank Killer (see panel), followed by an EBS version of Tank in 1992. By the time we enter the single European market, you could be thundering across a 3D virtual world in your metal monster, while your buddy from Holland sits on your shoulder in his Falcon, alert for the unwelcome attentions of that objectionable nerd from Stoke Poges who fancies himself as an A10 tank buster.

IT'S ONLY A GAME

Getting back into the cockpit of Falcon 3.0 for a moment, what – apart from a monstrous multiplayer capability – does this beast promise?

First, the game is a massive improvement on its excellent predecessor in terms of scenario. Whereas the original Falcon has fixed missions (boring missions, after a week or two of intensive gaming, the uncharitable might add), Falcon 3.0 offers the player a three way choice: a complete, continuous campaign scenario, individual missions, or even the option to design your own missions for that particularly devious or personally inspired combat challenge.

Once you've made up your mind, you enter a whole game sub-strata involving equipment and manpower management. Starting with your team-mates, you can create different squadrons and save them to disk together with their call signs, attributes, flying history, morale and individual skills.

Weapon selection is detailed and comprehensive. Unlike the earlier Falcon program, Falcon 3.0 gives you a complete choice of ordnance (that's military supplies, jargon freaks), ranging from the M9P heat seeking missile to Paveway guided bombs. 'If it's commercially available for the F16,' claims project leader Kuswara Pranawahadi, 'we've got it in the game.'

Naturally you choose your weapons according to the mission you have to accomplish. There are three different theatres of war to

Falcon 3.0 Techno-data

- **Supports EGA/VGA 16 or 256 colours as appropriate.**
- **Occupies over 8 megabytes.**
- **Destructive capability includes M9P heat seekers, MAM120 radar guided missiles, Maverick air/ground guided missiles, GBU guided bombs, CBU cluster bombs, MK82 1000lb monsters, Turandel anti-runway bombs, and more...**
- **Graphics alone required three full-time artists**
- **Modem support from 1200 to 9600 baud;\ also direct connect and networking**
- **Electronic Battlefield System capability**
- **Suggested US retail price**

operate in: Israel, Kuwait, and one that has yet to be decided, but could be modelled on Panama. If you can't be bothered to design your own mission, don't worry – there are over ten associated with each theatre, providing enough challenge to keep you playing for weeks, if not months.

If you're on campaign and out to win the war, your day starts with a choice of available missions. Your selection could be influenced by many different factors: weather, availability of team mates with the correct skills, defensive/offensive activity on possible routes to the target, available weaponry, and other life-or-death decisions.

If you're in normal (as opposed to EBS) multiplayer mode (linked over a modem, or – for PC players – via a network), you can choose whether to fly missions head-to-head or jointly.

Before you can fire up on the runway, however, you've got to decide how to reach your target. Falcon 3.0 can display detailed maps of possible routes, including information about threats en route and relevant topography. You might choose, for example, a low-level strike, using the valleys for shelter and then approaching your target from behind a range of mountains, limiting visual contact to the last few vital seconds. Topography – as we'll see later – is vitally important in this game and plays a major role in tactical decision making.

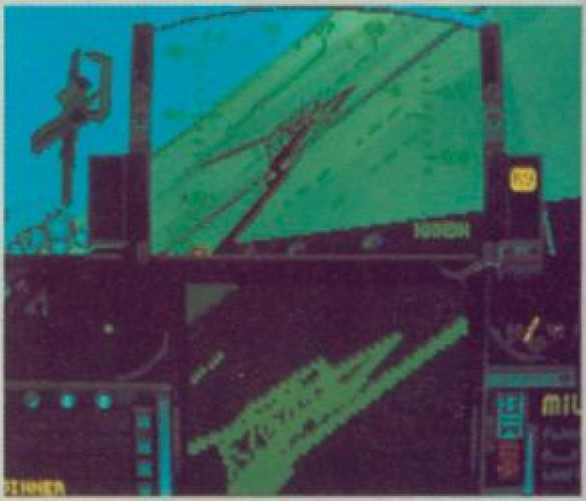
Setting out on a mission can get you skyborne with as many as eight friendly aircraft, giving you four possible double-up formations. Your route displays will have given you waypoints and time/co-ordinate data that can be fed to each formation, enabling you to rendezvous (or split off) at any time en route or at the target. You can also pre-select combat procedures for different waypoints, enabling you to, for example, send a colleague ahead to bomb certain strategic points en route before committing the rest of your men.

Choosing the pilot skills you need will also involve routing considerations: let's, for example, send Lieutenant 'Chucky' Cobblers (who's a dab hand with the air-to-surface missiles) off round that mountain range at high altitude so he can flatten that artillery range, ready for our approach from the North accompanied by Captain 'Shivers' Malarkey, who couldn't hit New Orleans at 500 yards but can take out practically anything with wings...and so on. The level of detail involved in mission planning is so great that, as the weight of responsibility begins to settle on your shoulders, your adrenalin levels are popping the cranial rivets before you've even got into the plane...

© Ian Allan Ltd, photo by Peter Foster

The General Dynamics F16 Fighting Falcon first hit the hangars in January 1979 after several years of development and military spending controversy. Airforces ranging from Venezuela to Japan (a massive order for 130 aircraft) have joined the queue to operate one of the world's most popular fighters. Its success has guaranteed it a major role in aerial combat well into the next century.

ACE readers who would like a superb portfolio of F16 photography could do a lot worse than shell out £5.95 for Peter Foster's excellent pictorial souvenir of the aircraft, published by Ian Allan Ltd, and from which this photograph was taken. You can order it from your local bookseller: ISBN no 0-7110-1812-X.



Not only do you get topographical landscape – you also get enhanced terrain features as well. And check out the smoke in the bottom left of the cockpit display – you actually get smoke in this game, not polygon clusters that look like rock-solid pyramids in mid-air

TOPO' THE WORLD

Once you've actually made it above 200 feet, you're in for another suprise – the topography. 'I haven't seen a single game with good 3D terrain,' says Kuswara, 'We will be the first company to bring out a flight sim with a realistic 3D terrain.'

Mountains in Falcon 3.0 aren't just pyramids, they're towering jagged polygons of rock that line deep, verdant valleys. Once you're in the driving seat, you and your wingmen can take the high road or the low road. You fly over a full 64-coloured landscape – the game version that we saw was still in development and didn't have the turn of speed one would like to see in a finished product, but Spectrum Holobyte are confident they can deliver a satisfying punch in the kidneys when you blow the afterburners in the finished version.

There's variety up in the sky as well as down on the ground. As well as the F16, you'll encounter at least five other makes of plane, including AWACS spotter aircraft who can communicate vital information about threat and opportunity beyond your personal horizon. And if you've got a PC you get some pretty sexy sound as well, thanks to AdLib, Soundblaster, MT32 and PS1 sound system support.

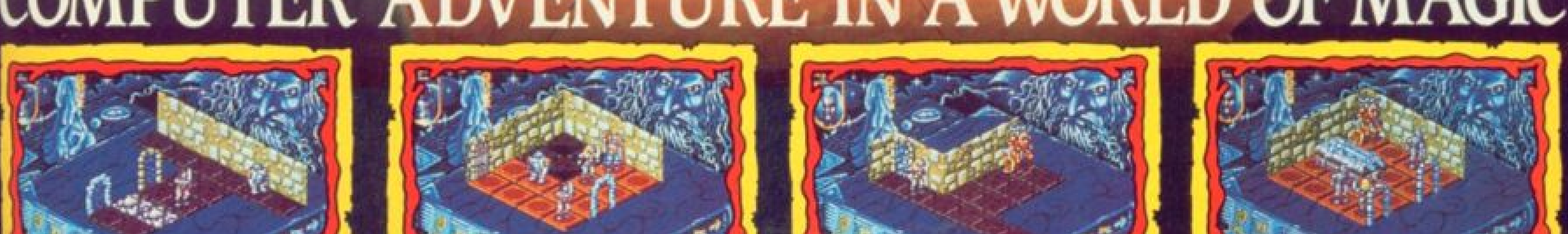
Simulation sensitivity is adjustable too, over four levels ranging from a barnstorming beginners mode, for those who want to be able to climb to 60000 feet at full speed without dropping a single point on the airspeed indicator, to a serious simulator fans' fantasy with a control sensitivity that, claim the company, '...is the same as a professional simulation trainer.' And they ought to know – they make them.

You can also determine many other game factors, ranging from enemy logic (from 'Drone' to 'ACE'), weapon effectiveness, and speed of game set-up. The latter is particularly useful if you want to get up into the air within seconds of booting up your computer and can't be bothered with all that real-world simulation stuff beforehand...

Spectrum Holobyte had a winner on their hands with the original Falcon. If the finished version of Falcon 3.0 lives up to the promise of the program we saw running in Oakland, California, it'll be burning up the skies over Chingford, the Gorbals, Warrington, Tierra del Fuego, Canterbury, the Piddle Valley...wherever there's a mains plug to fire up with, a computer to arm and a comfortable chair to get you airborne.

From the best selling role-playing game Gremlin brings you...

COMPUTER ADVENTURE IN A WORLD OF MAGIC



Screen shots from Amiga version

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd.,
Carver house, 2-4 Carver Street,
Sheffield S1 4FS
Tel: (0742) 753423

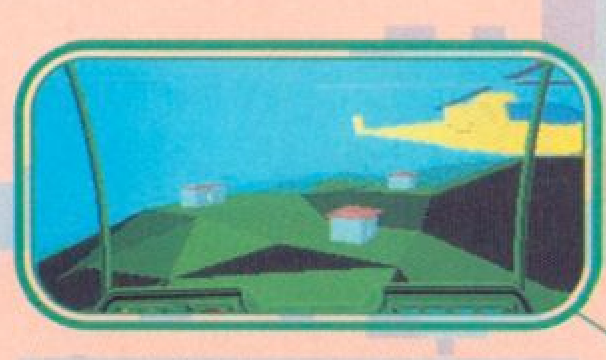
GREMLIN®

HeroQuest © 1990 Milton Bradley Ltd

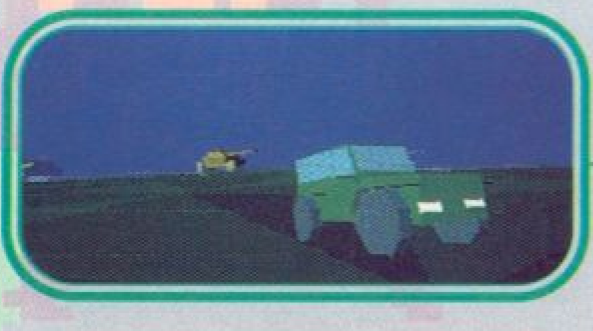
Available On:
Amiga • Atari ST/STE •
Spectrum, Amstrad and
C64 cassette & disk
(PC VERSION AVAILABLE SUMMER 91)

FLAMES O

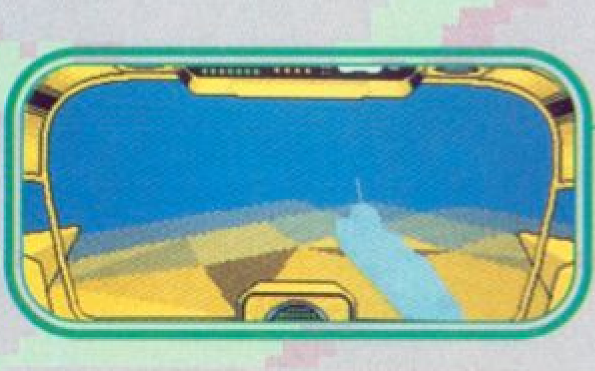
Flames of Freedom, the new blockbuster from the creators of Midwinter, offers you total freedom. Freedom of choice, Freedom of action, Freedom of movement.



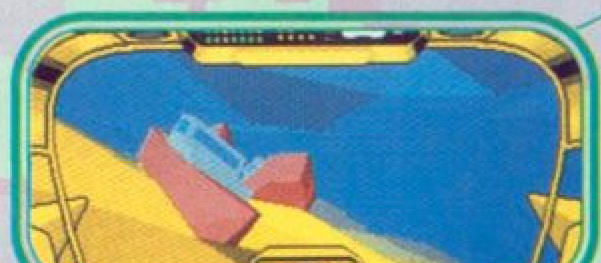
Dogfight with opponents over villages for command of the skies, or attack ground targets which serve the enemy's cause.



Night time sequences afford excellent cover for secret movement and actions, illuminated by the glare of your jeep's headlights.



The playing area of three million cubic miles is not restricted solely to areas above ground. You have full freedom of movement underwater, and three types of 'submarine' in which to achieve it.



Seek out and destroy enemy shipping units, condemning them to a watery grave on the sea bed, from where the ocean's surface is clearly visible above.

Screen shots shown are taken from the Atari ST versions. Actual sceens may vary by format

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TOTAL FREEDOM- FROM RAI

(1,000 miles long X 1,000 miles wide X 15,000 feet high.) + (4,000 characters X 22 modran

O FREEDOM

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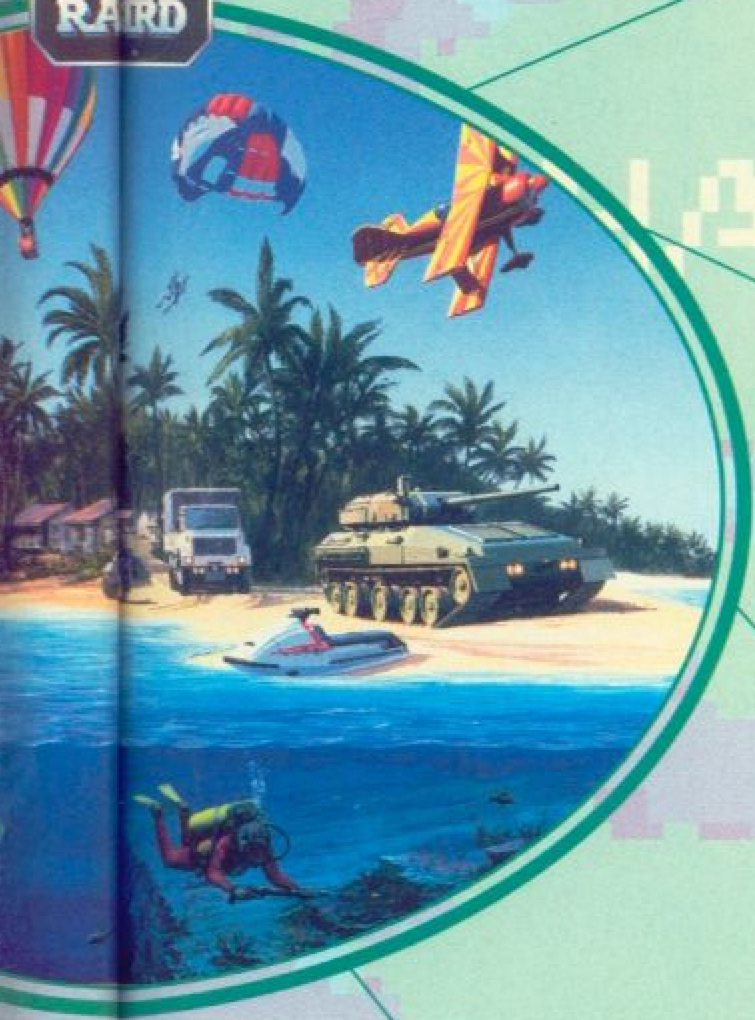
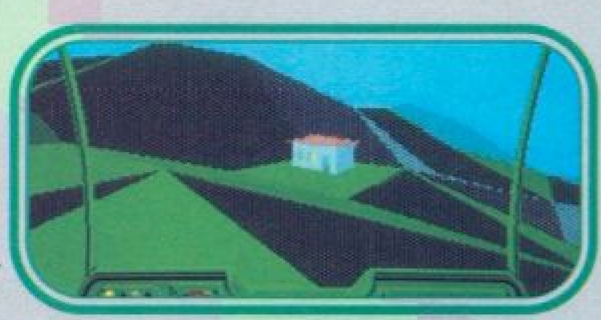
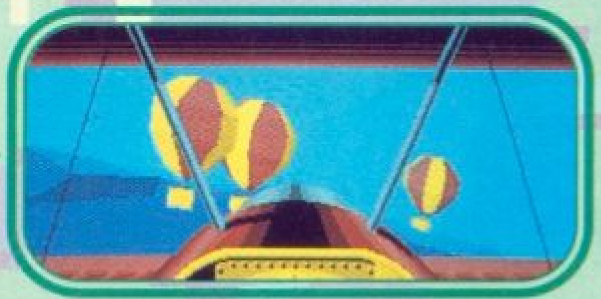
eedom

A three dimensional environment packed with action, adventure and strategy. Entering it is easy......breaking free is what's hard !

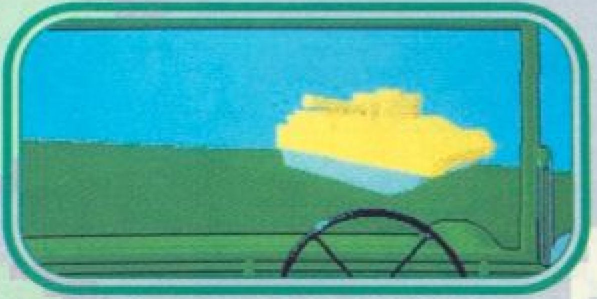




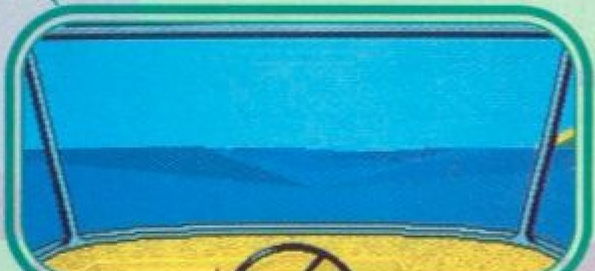
A million square miles of accurately mapped 3-D terrain, generated by fractal techniques, and fully light sourced throughout, provides a playing arena far superior to even its predecessor, Midwinter I.



Fly the skies above the forty-one islands by helicopter, zeppelin, parachute, rocket pack, or, as seen here, biplane and balloon, all offering superb views of the land and of the other aircraft.



The enemy have a vast array for firepower aimed at you, on land, in the air, and across the sea, and react quickly and intelligently to your actions.



The sea surface is generated by constantly moving fractal points, causing you to bob up and down as you swim or sail across it.

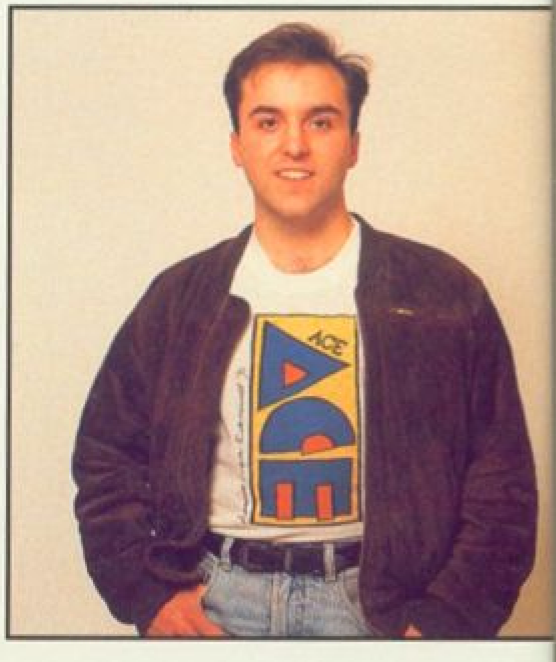
Flames of Freedom will be available shortly for your Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC compatibles.

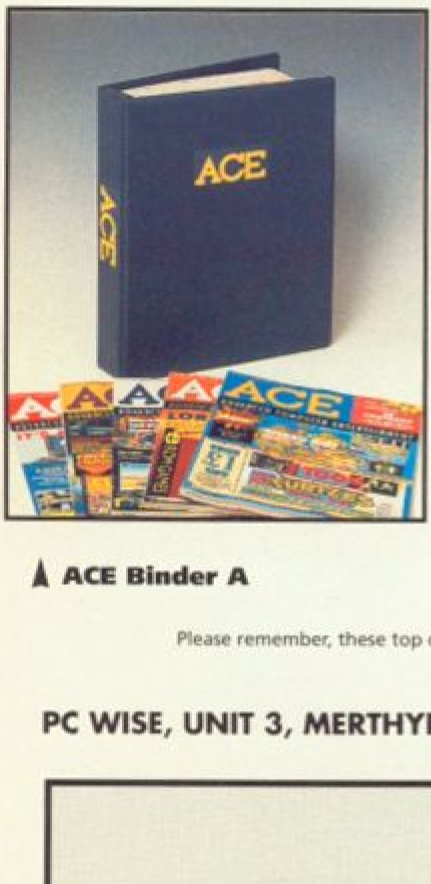
M RA IRD MASTERS OF STRATEGY

2 mode transprt X 1,000s of buildings) = 3,000,000 cubic miles of Action, Adventure and Strategy.

ACE MERCHANDISE OFFER

There can surely be nothing more sexy and fashionable than the ACE t-shirt. This latest item in the *Ace Clothing Collection* is what every self respecting computing genius will be wearing this season. The eye catching ensemble has been exclusively designed by ACE's own art editor, Jim "Gaultier" Willis, for the lover of fine things and the reader with good taste. The t-shirt is available in sizes small, medium and extra large and can be purchased at the ridiculously low price of £5.99**





There is no better way of storing your copies of this, the world's finest computer entertainment magazine, than in an ACE binder. The binders are available in two designs - so as to satisfy even the most stalwart supporter of style and quality - and can be yours for the embarrassingly inexpensive price of £5.99

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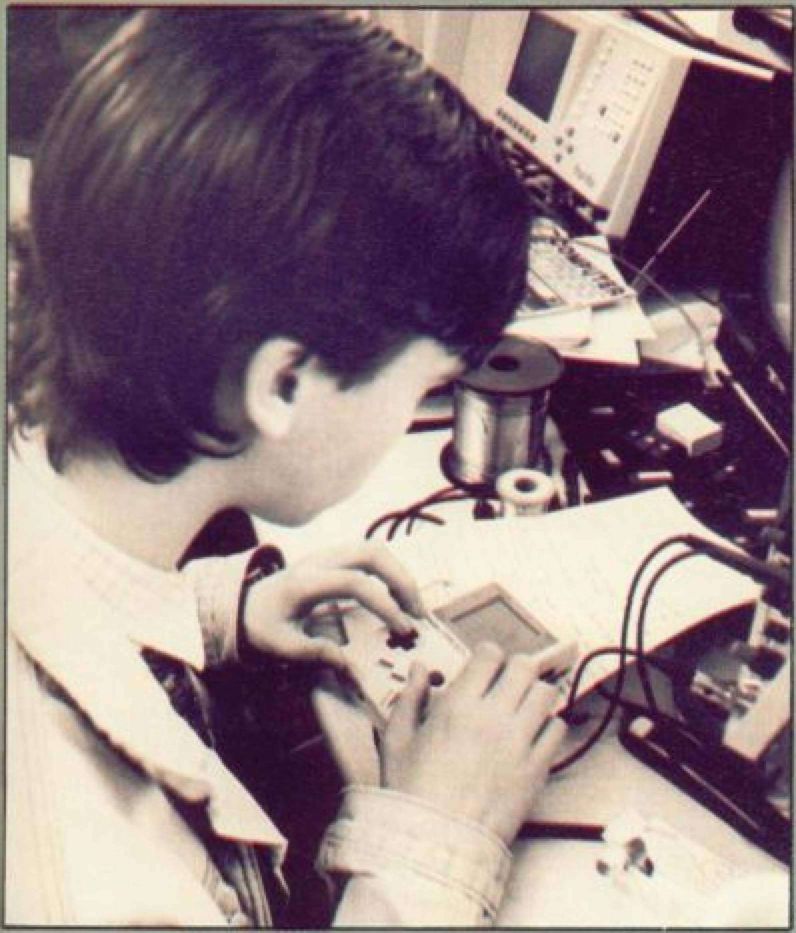
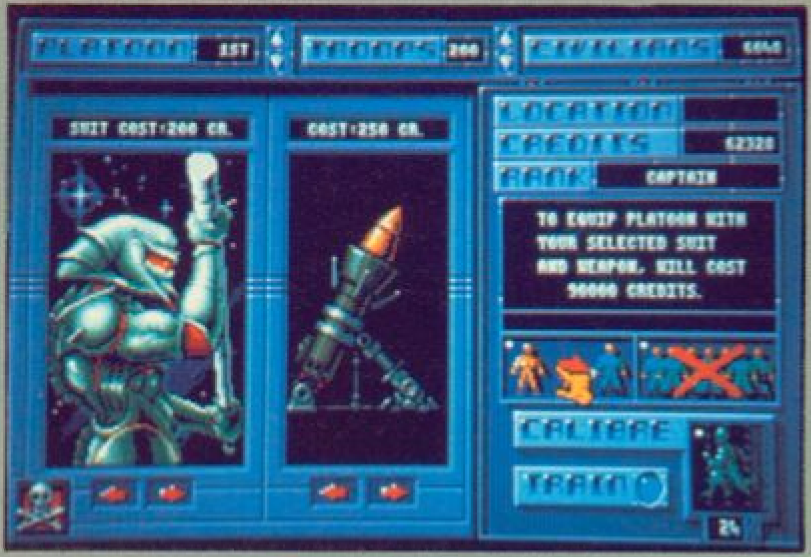


(Left)
Console development under way at Gremlin. You could join in the fun in the new season of ACE Conferences...



TO EQUIP PLATOON WITH YOUR SELECTED SUIT AND WEAPON, WILL COST 96000 CREDITS.

(Above)
Supremacy from Virgin – just one of the great products you can find out more about on your trip to Richard Branson's games development operation

ON SAFARI!

Join us at the next ACE Conference, travel to exotic locations around Britain, bypass elaborate security systems, enter Restricted Programming Zones, see Top Secret Unreleased Games...and play them. Here's how...

You don't just get to play games at the ACE Conferences either. Even more important, you also get a chance to meet the people who develop them. In 1990, ACE readers have gone on safari to companies like US Gold, Activision, Domark, and Mirrorsoft. We're now opening the hunting season again for 1991, and our first venues will be Virgin and Gremlin.

Virgin are based in West London and Gremlin are up in Sheffield, so readers from different areas of the country will get a chance to pay a visit to someone (relatively) close. If the distance is daunting, don't worry – we've got visits coming up to Manchester, Scotland, and Reading, so keep your fingers crossed.

THE HUNT

What happens at an ACE Conference?

This question is actually impossible to answer because we try to structure the day as little as possible. As a general rule, however, conferences begin at 12.30pm and end around 5.45pm. A light lunch is provided to keep you going.

When you arrive you're introduced to the other attendees (we try to create a spread of age ranges and machine owners at each event), to the ACE staff members who are present (lucky you) and, of course, to the software house crew you're visiting. You'll probably get a quick guided tour of the premises and a member of the software house will tell you a bit about the business side of developing games.

Despite the fact that we have a lot of fun and games at conferences, there is a serious side to it all too. Here at ACE we believe that contact between developers and the people who actually buy their games is vitally important for everyone. It gives them a chance to hear your honest opinion about their titles (which you'll be encouraged to give) and you a chance to hear their opinions on topics ranging from licenses and piracy through to graphics and gameplay.

During the afternoon, the software house will usually enjoy showing off some of their latest titles under development. You'll get a chance to play some of their games and tell the developers what you think of their efforts. During past ACE Conferences, ACE readers' opinions have actually resulted in significant changes to new games – something you can justifiably boast about for several months afterwards!

At the end of the day, you'll find you've made some new friends – and most important, you'll know a lot more than most people about the real world of games publishing. So...what are you waiting for?!

HOW TO JOIN THE PARTY...

Each month, we'll let you know in the magazine about forthcoming conferences around the country. If you think you might be interested in attending one, all you have to do is send us a postcard with your name and address clearly written, together with a daytime telephone number if at all possible.

You also need to tell us:

- **Which conference you would like to attend. If you're applying for more than one, put them in order of preference. If no conference is listed for the software house you'd like to visit, put the software house's name down and we'll put you the list for that conference when (and if) it is organised in the future.**
- **The machine you own, so we can make sure you get some juicy free gifts for your micro!**
- **Your age, so that we can ensure a good spread of age groups at each conference.**
- **If you are a subscriber, send your application in an envelope together with the address panel from the last issue of ACE that you were sent.**
- **If you are not a subscriber, we make a token charge of £5. You will need to bring this payment to the conference and we reserve the right to refuse admission to anyone who hasn't got it! If you've taken out a subscription since applying, you can bring your address panel with you instead – so if you're planning on coming to a conference anyway, it's a neat way of effectively saving £5 on your subscription charge...You can find a subscription offer on pages 84/85 in this issue.**

Obviously we have to limit the number of people attending each conference. Numbers vary depending on the location, but we usually accept between eight and 15 people for each event. All places are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

A couple of weeks (sometimes the notice is shorter) before each conference we'll let you know whether you've been selected. If any of the selected attendees can't attend, we'll shortlist you for a future conference and choose someone else to take their place.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Virgin Mastertronic

A truly awesome day out with the company who brought you game classics ranging from Dan Dare to Supremacy, who are investing heavily in new technology and CD development, and who are part of a group that's into everything from airlines to computer supplies.

The location: West London

***The date*: Wednesday 19th June**

Gremlin Graphics

A company who have produced the most stunning reversal of fortune the software industry has ever seen, from being perceived as a puppet of US Gold to a dynamic and innovative publisher with superb titles like Lotus Esprit and Switchblade II. They go a long way back, too, to the days of Tony Crowther, Potty Pigeon, and Monty Mole. Gremlin are also heavily involved in console development, and you'll be able to see projects underway for the PC Engine, Game Boy, and NES...

The location: Sheffield

***The date*: Tuesday 11th June**

LET'S DO THE SHOW RIGHT HERE ▸

The games-buying public aren't invited to the ECTS. ACE sneaks you in the back door...

No! Not Victoria Station, it's the Business Design Centre in trendy Islington, venue for show.

This year's European Computer Trade Show was a peculiar event. Although never expected to boast the razzmatazz of the Entertainment show in September, it was none-the-less a somewhat subdued affair, with folks from the software biz less concerned about having an enjoyable time and more concerned with expending more of their energies on the seamy side of actually making money.

The non-consumer policy enables exhibitors to wander around freely without being trampled, and makes for a slightly more sane atmosphere, but without the flashing lights, pumping music and frenetic buzz generated by a consumer-led event, it's easy to forget that these people are in the entertainment business.

Without the incentive to dazzle the prospective punters, most exhibitors opted for conservative box-like stands with a meagre frontispiece and an office inside. Indeed, the quotient of profitable deals was pretty high, but no-one seemed to be having much fun.

Even the promotional activity seemed to be a bit half-hearted with a couple of men dressed up as *Lemmings* wandering folornly through the ranks of suits.

Among the more noteworthy items on show were *Sonic the Hedgehog*, a game finally offering Megadrive owners some ammunition with which to defend themselves from rabid Famicom *Mario* fans, and the arrival of the Gamegear.

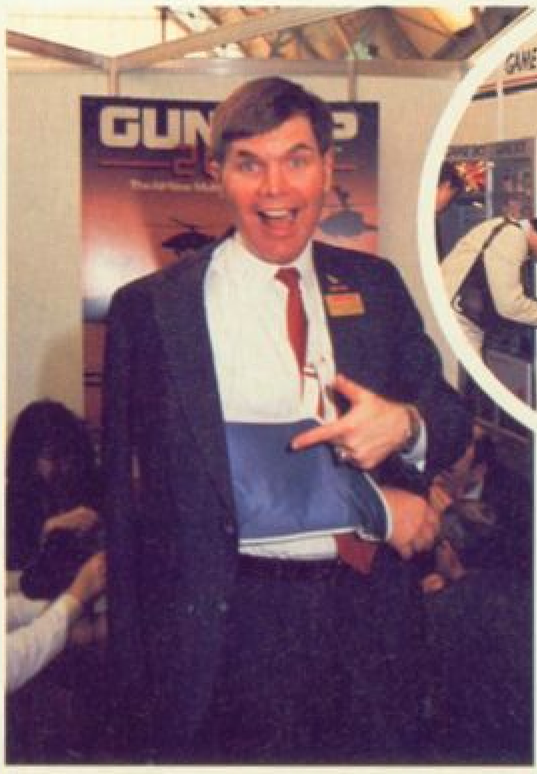
And the best news of all is that the number of exhibitors signing up for a massive presence at the trade and consumer European Computer Entertainment Show in September is rising by the day. We look forward to seeing you there!

THE PARTIES:

After all the deals have been done, and before the ink has dried, happy (and not so happy) businessmen are enjoying civilised drinkies in one of the nearby alehouses.

Saturday evening, and **Vic Naylor's** near Smithfield market is the venue for the Black and White Party, arranged by PR guru Simon Harvey and Ocean's Gary Bracey and Dean Barrett.

● Atmosphere: 7: - Non-groovy sounds. A bit crowded owing to size of the venue. However, the beer was flowing nicely and everyone was in a good mood. Helped along by top industry



GAME BOY
GAME BOY
GAME BOY
GAME BOY
GAME BOY

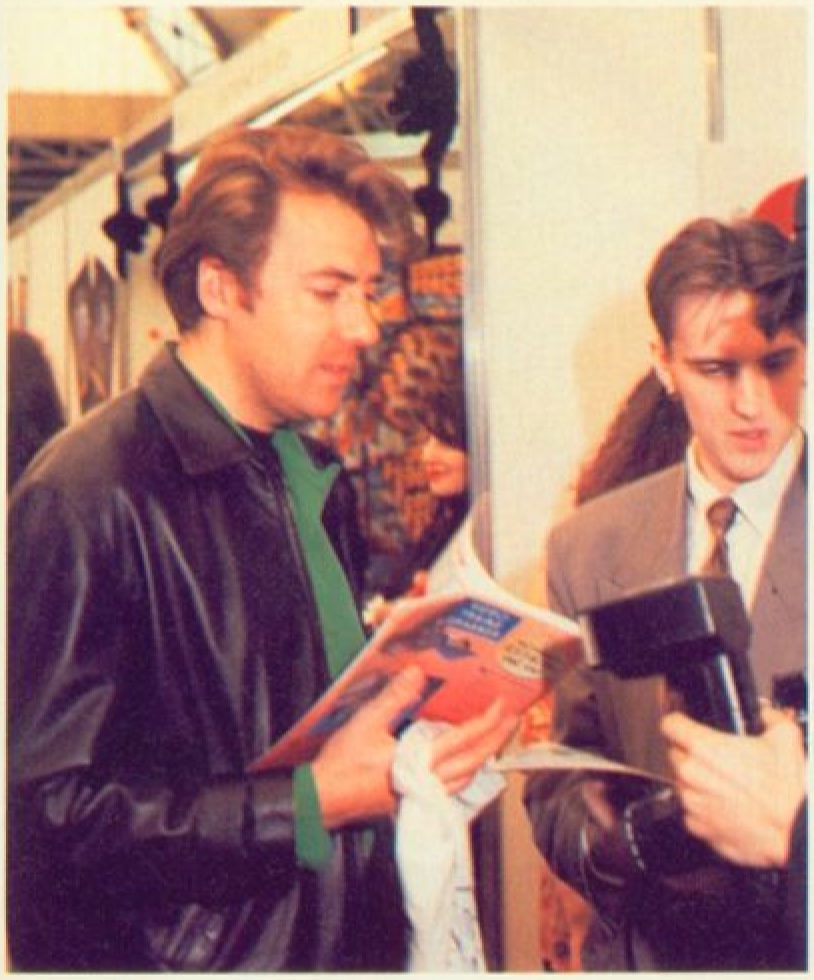
(Inset Left)
Snore! The latest in Gameboy software, *Hand-Held Home Accounts* and *Super SpreadsheetLand* has the players fighting hard - to stay awake!

(Above)
US Gold PR Manager, Danielle Woodyatt (left) was busy as ever, promoting a range of products including *Cruise for a Corpse*, *Indiana Jones IV* and *Return to Monkey Island*.

(Above right)
"Wild" Bill Stealey, Microprose's infamous founder paid a flying visit from the States early in the show. He's certainly getting into the sling of it.

(Right)
Ocean's Gary Bracey tries out the latest Japanese craze: Virtual Reality contact lenses!

(Far Right)
"Did you hear the one about the man who crossed an ST with a Spectrum?" Alan Miles (Team SAM) already knows the punchline.



(Far left)
Top TV personality Jonathan Ross enjoys a wander around the show.

(Left)
STORM were whipping up enthusiam for their forthcoming titles, *Rodland, Big Run* and *Double Dragon 3.*

(Below)
Dominic Wheatley (left) and Mark Strachan, heads of Domark, scour an issue of ACE for tips on *Hard Drivin' 2.*

figures and the fact that the show hadn't started yet and so no-one was knackered.

- Food: 1 - Rubbish! Hungry journos need some decent nosh, not measly peanuts and cheesy nibbles.
- Drink: 4 - "Free" beers and wine supplied although it cost £15 on the door for entry in the first place.
- PR Validity: 8 - No product to push, this was an all-out fun-binge. Everyone let their hair down and had a nice time. Gary, Simon and Dean boosted their already soaring popularity among the industry movers and shakers.

Sunday evening, and the Major Event! Leicester Square's trendy Hippodrome plays host to the industry for what should have been a glittering and enjoyable event from all concerned. Anything further from the truth would have been hard to imagine. This particular party was heralded as a big deal owing to the announcement of various computer-leisure awards. However, revellers were disappointed on a number of counts. The ceremony took forever, there weren't any awards to give away anyway (they were held up in transit) the celebrity cabaret was terrible and the "free" bar extended to two (count 'em) drinks.
And the cost of entry? £44 each.

- Atmosphere:2-Trendy location, lots of people.
- Food: 3 - Horrible buffet.
- Drink: 2 - Champagne/beer. Far from cheap.
- PR Validity: 0.

Monday evening saw the Accolade cocktail reception in full swing in The Filling Station bar, attached to the Business Design Centre.

Rarely have so many industry heavyweights had to come into quite such close contact with each other. The promise of sampling the novel Accolade Atom Bomb (a concoction so bizarre a prize was awarded for anyone brave enough to successfully determine its contents) proved tempting enough to fill the station to bursting point.

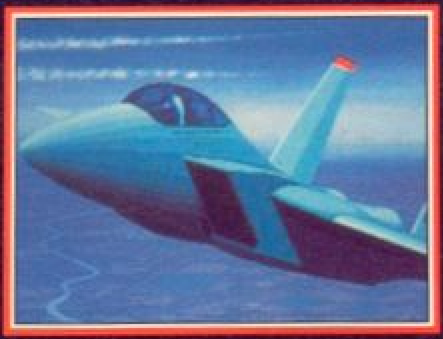
- Atmosphere: 6 - No music. Lots of fun but enjoyment hampered by feeling like you were standing in a cattle truck in the rush hour.
- Drink:10 - Anything you want, all for free.
- Food: 5 - Lots of nice nibbles, not especially substantial
- PR Validity: 3 - No big announcements to maximize potential coverage for the receptive audience.

● Jim Douglas

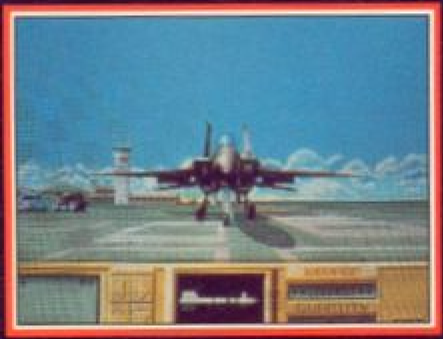
For a full report on the show's major announcements and events, see the News pages.

(Below right)
Jonathan Ellis, head honcho at Psygnosis, is keen to scotch rumours that he provided the inspiration for those dreamy little Lemmings.

(Bottom)
Adrian Parr, MD of Microprose UK, is currently filling the recently vacated shoes of ex-Marketing Manager Peter Jones, who has taken up residence at Sierra's newly-opened UK office. Looks he'll have to play it by ear!

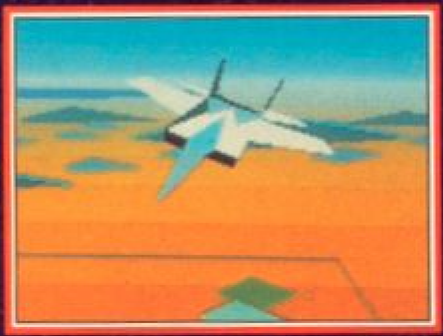


Four levels of difficulty will help you to learn quickly - and optional autopilot landings will allow you to concentrate on airborne action. The controls are simple, effective, and easy to remember. It is a great flight sim for beginners and experts alike.

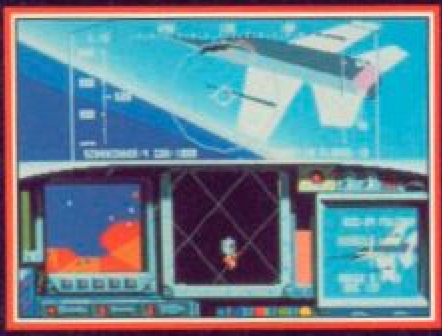


Fly missions in any of six real world arenas from the Persian Gulf to Vietnam, Central Europe to the Middle East and the North Cape to North Africa, giving you a total flying area of nearly half a million square miles.
Each area contains hundreds of missions and each mission will differ depending on your chosen tactics, even if you fly it twice!

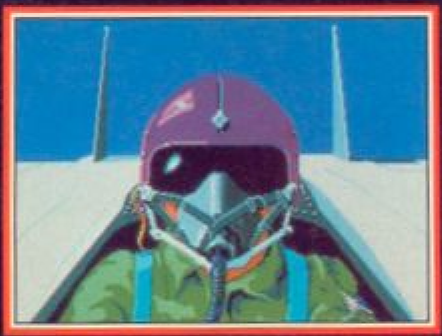
IBM PC & Amiga screen shots



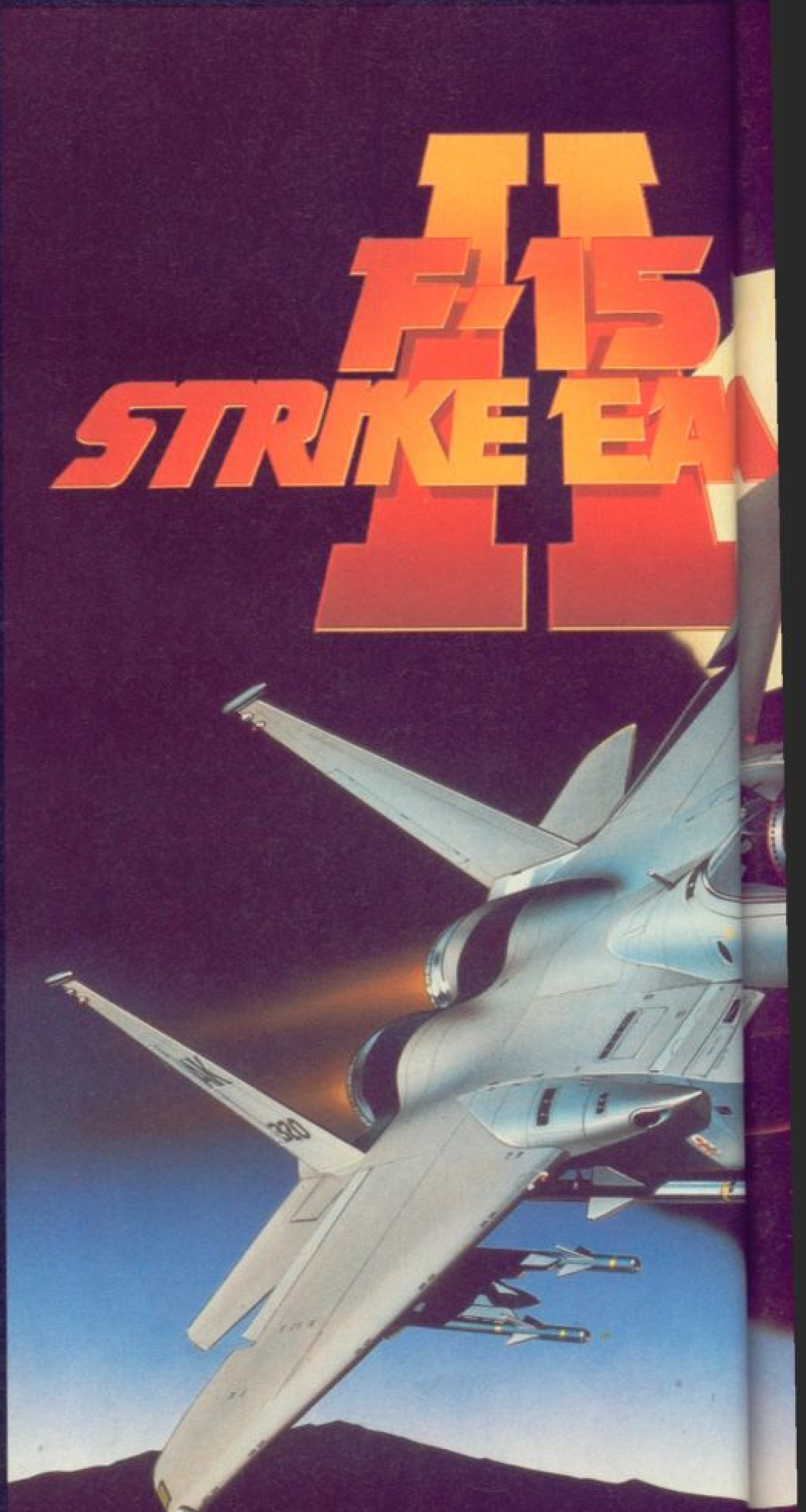
An amazing ten viewpoints give you the opportunity to view the fast flowing 3-D environment from virtually anywhere around your plane - and a unique "Director" option can be used to automatically change the view for you, so that you're always looking right at the centre of the action.



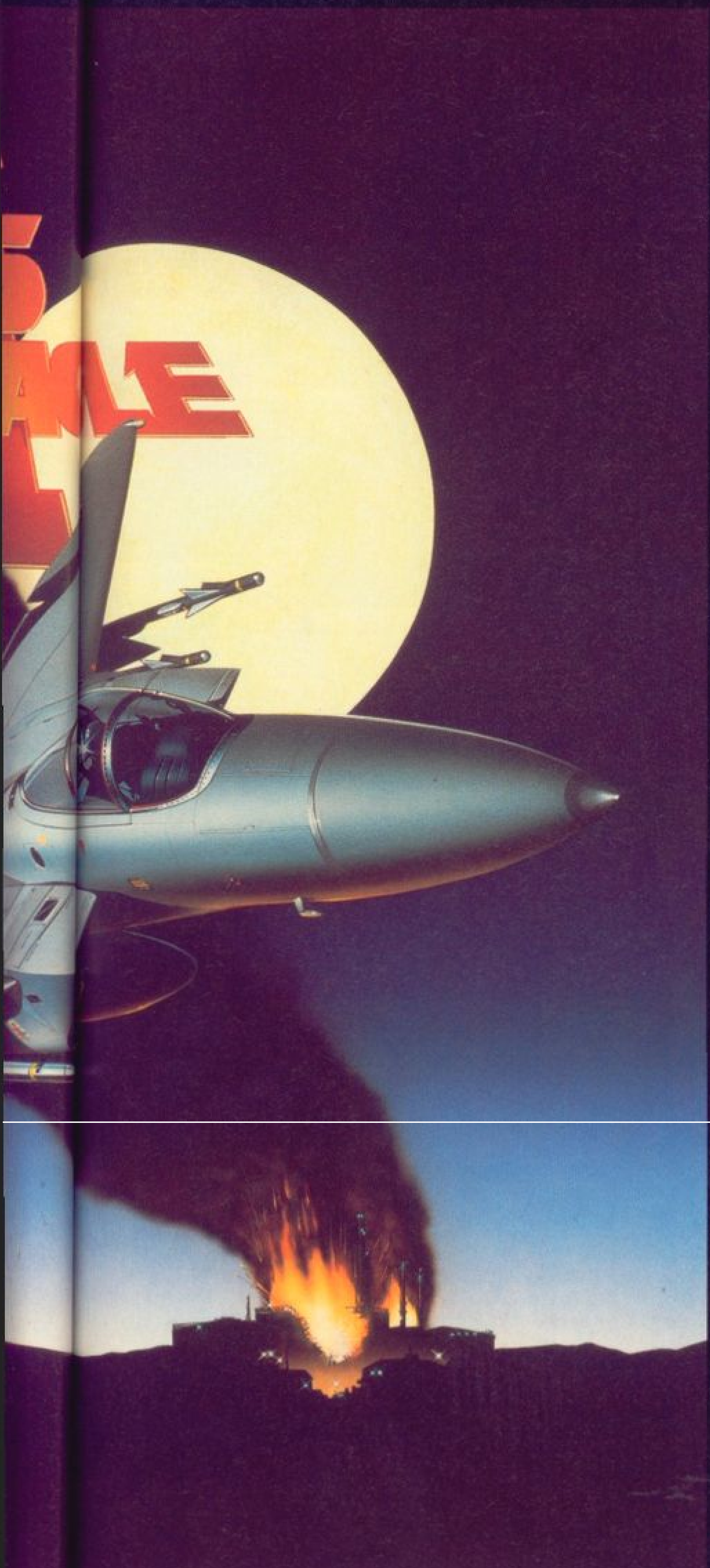
The newest smart weaponry and laser-guided armaments are primed for launch - it's your job to make sure that you're in the right place at the right time, and avoiding the constant enemy attack being thrown at you.



Enemy pilots and missile crews act and react intelligently and quickly. Success depends on making the right moves - and making them fast. F15 Strike Eagle II puts you in the hottest seat of them all - Take a look for yourself.



F15 Strike Eagle II follows F19 and Gunship into the front line. The latest and tes

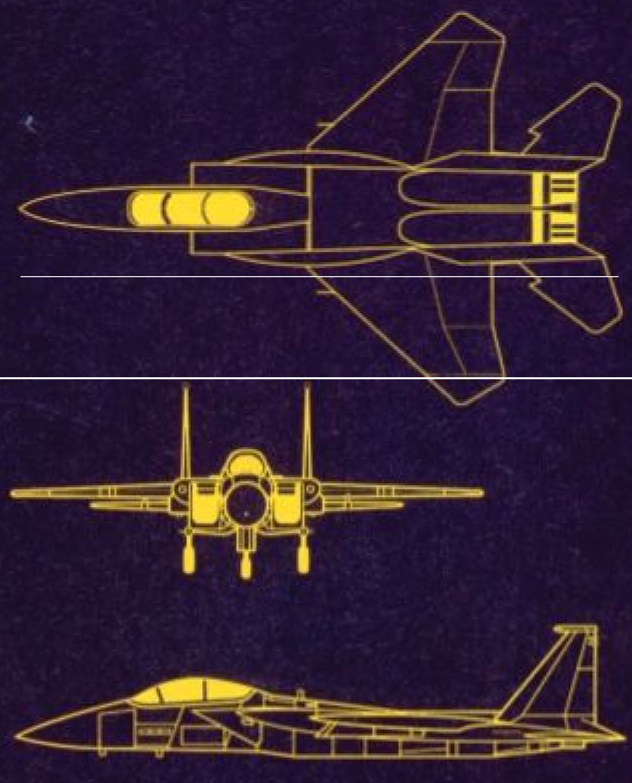


AIR SUPERIORITY

The F15 Strike Eagle is the latest in a long line of F15 Eagles, whose development began in the mid '60s. Originally conceived as an ultra-powerful, ultra-fast air-superiority fighter, the design has developed into an air-superiority fighter with ground-attack capabilities.

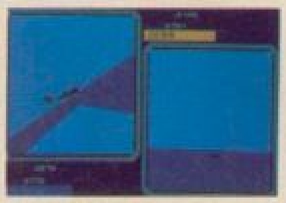
The F15 Strike Eagle is one of the fastest, most manoeuvrable, and most powerful military aircraft in the world. It has the capacity to carry the latest air-to-air and air-to-ground armament in addition to its 20mm cannon.

The latest version of the Strike Eagle is equipped with a sophisticated zoom FLIR/TV/Laser target tracking system that allows the pilot to see close up views (either TV or thermal) of the target at all times.

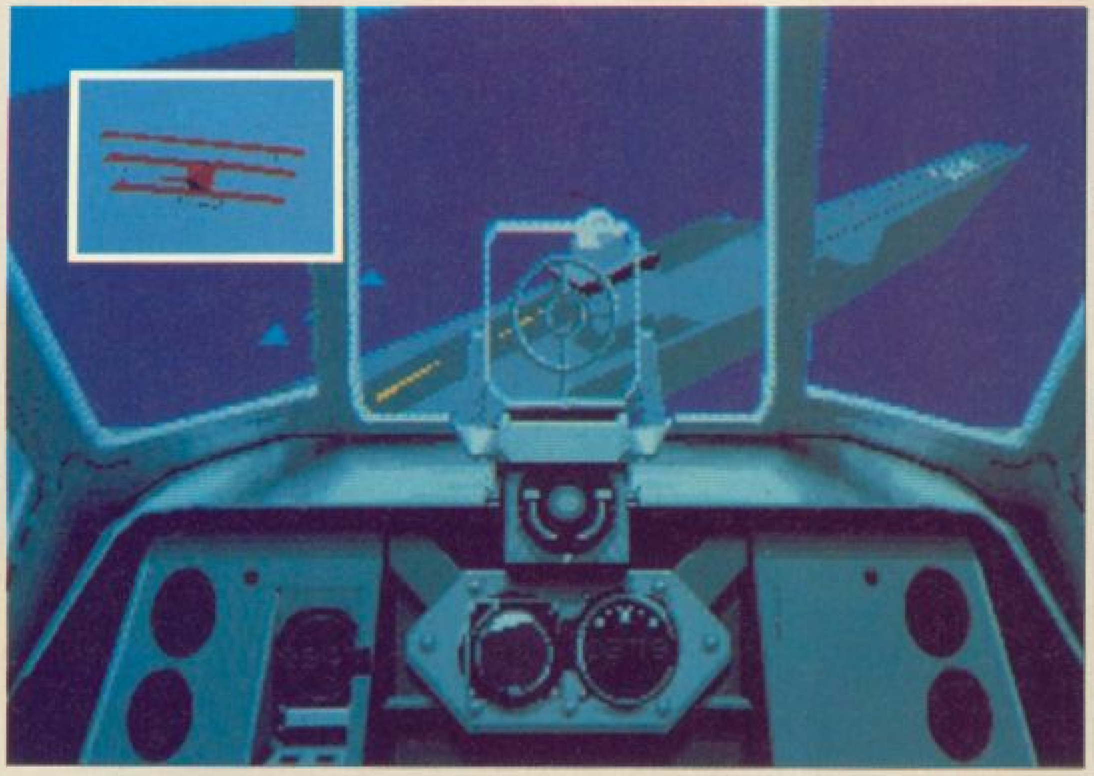


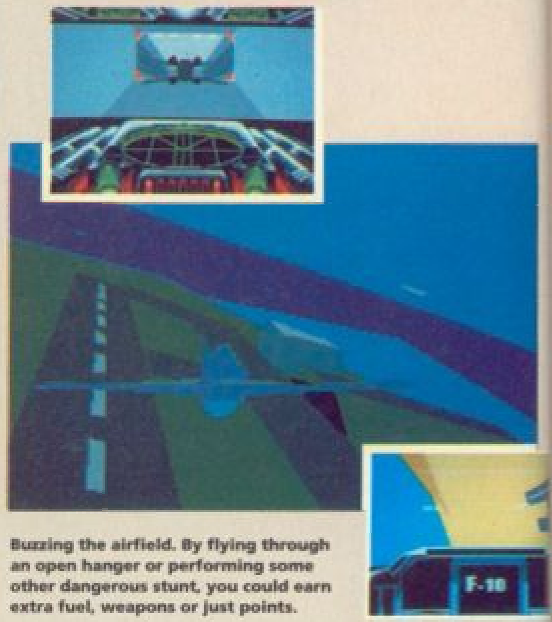
MICROPROSE™
SIMULATION • SOFTWARE

nd g test from MicroProse will soon be available for Commodore Amiga and Atari ST.



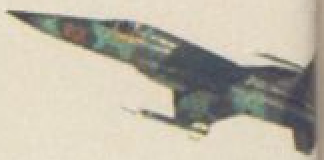
In *Air Duel* the player can take up anything from a WWI biplane to a WWII fighter to a WWIII jet! Even better, two players can engage one another in a tense dogfight thanks to a unique split-screen display.





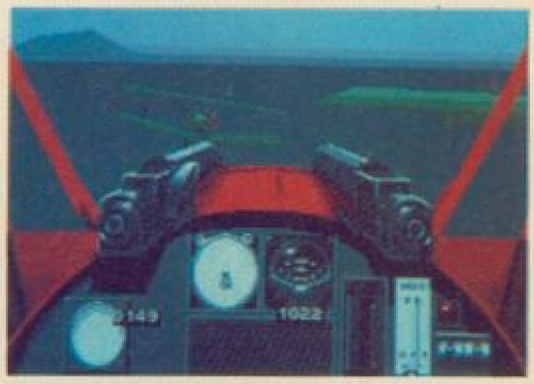
Buzzing the airfield. By flying through an open hanger or performing some other dangerous stunt, you could earn extra fuel, weapons or just points.

AIR DUEL



Welcome to the first all-action dogfighting flight simulation from MICROPROSE. Rik Haynes talks to programmer Glyn Williams about his new baby... and the game!

Do you ever wonder what it's like to dogfight at supersonic speeds over bright desert skies? What about outflying the Red Baron in World War One? Imagine the kind of neat reverse-thrust frolics you could do in outer space with a futuristic fighter? These are just three of the questions that have inspired Glyn Williams to write *Air Duel*, a flight-sim that lets you dogfight some exhilarating combat aircraft from the past, present and future. With *Air Duel* you can climb into a Sopwith Camel biplane or hit hyperspace with an interstellar spacecraft. You can even go Tora! Tora! Tora! in a Japanese Zero carrier-fighter from the Second World War.



Blasting away from the cockpit of your biplane.

***Explain the concept of* Air Duel?**

I'm more interested in *Air Duel* being a game rather than a simulator – although it does borrow from the simulator genre. My original intention was to make it more towards a coin-opy sort of 3D game rather than a heavily detailed simulator. The simulation elements are important to Microprose so I'm developing those a little bit more.

Coin-opy, what's that?

Things like immediacy, speed and pace. The fact that a playing session will be two minutes rather than two hours. With a coin-op, it's immediately obvious what you're supposed to do with it. You don't have to read a massive manual to play it. You just pick-it-up and go. The objective is simple and obvious. There are certain ways of doing things in coin-ops. There are scores and when your attention is being diverted in a particular way you get a big arrow rather than a subtle hint. The difference is a stylistic one.

What do players get up to?

The objective of the game is aerial combat and dogfighting. The fact there are two players fighting each other in, ideally, the most violent way possible – where their involvement in that conflict is maximised, their emotional involvement should be heightened. The ideal way of playing *Air Duel* will be between two-players with split-screen or two machines.

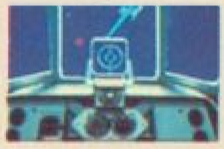
How does the game work?

It's set-up so there are four scenarios to choose from, which are sort of classic dogfighting encounters through history. This is a way of adding value to the game and makes *Air Duel* almost four separate products in its own right. The World War One scenario is played over the entrenched battlefields of Europe in 1918 – Sopwith Camels versus Fokker triplanes. This is an introduction to dogfighting, you get very close to your opponent. You move quite slowly, so there's a stronger element of strategy. The second scenario is set in the Pacific during World War Two. Carrier-based Wildcats against Japanese Zero's over a little Pacific islands. The main difference between the two World War scenarios is pace really. World War Two introduces power as an element in the conflict. The next scenario is the present day and this introduces jet aircraft, radar, HUDs and missiles as well as retaining the other elements. I'm going to do it in a Gulfy desert sort of scenario, carrier-based F-18 against the MiG-29 (one of the sexiest planes in the game). It was designed before the Gulf War but nobody will believe me. For the fourth option I thought I'd just go wacky and do a space game. I can chuck everything to the wind. Gravity goes out of the window. You have a much wider selection of weapons systems, some of them quite stupid and bizarre.

JUST WILLIAMS

Air Duel **will be the last project that Glyn Williams will design and write entirely on his own. He now has plans to set-up his own software development team dedicated to producing top quality 3D games. The 27-year-old Williams wants to do more game designing and is already devising a big campaign wargame/simulator with lots of vehicles and real-time action. He also thinks it would be nice to do a sequel to** ***Warhead*****, his challenging space-simulator with insect-like aliens and 'authentic' spaceflight controls. "I'd like to make the scenario bigger and wider," Williams says, "Down onto different worlds for Planetbusting. Heavy spaceships bombarding craggy planets. Something along the line of** ***Aliens*** **with descent vehicles plunging down into the atmosphere and tearing the crap out of alien cities. It's quite an intellectual type of product."**

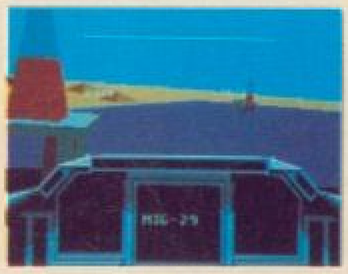
Will there be ground objects?
When I pick up a simulator the first thing I ever do is find a bridge or try and fly through a hangar, things like this. I'm not interested in authentically landing a 747 at Gatwick, I just want to do the stunts and stuff. So I want to force that kind of action into *Air Duel*. Every one of the scenarios is structured for this kind of thing. There are stunt positions and opportunities scattered throughout the maps. These are actually useful in gameplay terms. Pulling a stunt during the course of the game translates into extra score, fuel or weaponry. Imagine, if you're running low on fuel the conflict is going to end real quick but if you can manage to fly under that bridge with the amount of fuel you've got available you could go back to full fuel and weaponry and have that as an advantage over your enemy.

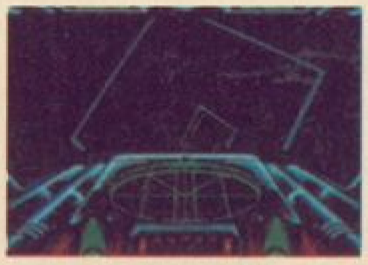


Give some examples of these stunts?
There's some quite dull ones. There's bridges and things that you have to underfly. Barnstorming. There's barns and various buildings that you have to fly through. And then there are some more exciting ones. In the World War Two scenario there's a carrier with holes under the main deck which you can actually fly through. Erm, are you with me? In the present day scenario there's obvious things like suspension bridges and oil stores. Similar to this, there are also things that you want to blow up other than your opponent. These are called Active Targets like fuel supplies, ammo dumps, radio masts, missile sites, all that sort of thing. Of course these Active Targets are appropriate to the current scenario. You fly over trenches and craters filled with water – and blow-up tanks, observation balloons and Zeppelins – in the World War One setting. The Active Targets blow up entertainingly and also translate into scoring points, fuel or weapons. These are very much gamey sort of things. They don't fit in with a mission-driven simulator.

Is it difficult simulating planes in a computer game?
It's quite interesting that. One of the ways that Microprose have been useful is that the Project Manager and Shape Designer Martin Moth can actually fly. So he does know what he's talking about. I do think there's a lot of bullshit talked about flight models by programmers. I trying to get something that feels right more than anything else. Responsive and flyable. The model has to be quite realistic as well. If I'm saying this is supposed to be a Wildcat, people would be disappointed if they could fly it 500 miles per hour or past the speed of sound. So you have to tweak the model make it behave within a reasonable set of characteristics that resemble that aircraft. It's more about being fun to play and fun to fight with.

Have you nearly finished Air Duel?
The surface detail is very scarce. Only half the artwork is done. It's at that sort of stage. Sort of in the middle. *Air Duel* was born out of the ashes of the Fokker project I was doing for Activision. If it was a team of 57 working on it, *Air Duel* would be finished next week. Since it's only me, it will be finished sometime later this year. I've got to take the prototype which is working combat and enrich that up into something people want to pay a lot of money for. So there's a lot of work left to do on presentation. You're going to have a really rich form of combat and options which allow players to fundamentally modify the way the game works. You can tinker about with how the game plays and scores, how difficult planes are to fly, whether you bounce-off or crash into the ground, and so on. You effectively get 10 games for the price of one. It's like a sport – one activity – which is beating the other player. It lives and dies on that one activity.

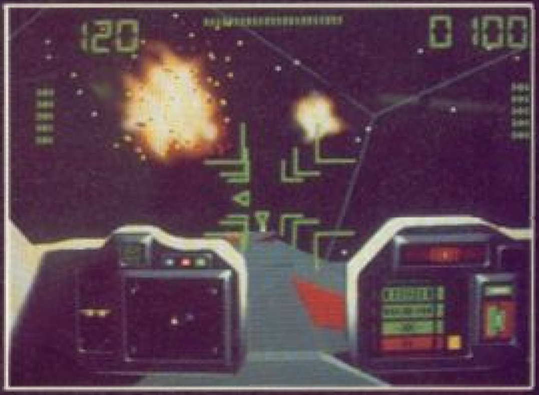




Were did you get the ideas?
Mainly through my own frustrations with flight simulator product. They didn't address what my needs were. I want to blow things up and kill other people. I wasn't interested in executing meticulously detailed missions. That's my gut reaction when I pick-up a flight simulator product. In *Air Duel* you want to locate the enemy straightaway. That's normally a very difficult thing to do in a computer flight-sim. You can't look behind or around you. You can't look into the distance very well. The tradition way to overcome this is by providing instruments. With a coin-op you don't want to learn about radars and HUDs or press keys on the keyboard. So in *Air Duel* if you can't find the enemy you fire some shots off – you've got limited ammo so it's costing you something – and you immediately get a big floating arrow that tells you the direction of your enemy. This wouldn't look too out of place in an arcade.

Care to describe any advances on the code front?
I'm kind of happy with the way my graphics system works. Not so much in dramatic performance, which I think seems about to be the same with every simulator released these days, but how nice and easy it is to program. This means it becomes quite inexpensive for me to do things like, erm, getting it to do stuff. If I wanted to show a particular view from a particular angle after something has happened, it's really easy to set-up a little program to do that. It's all very well and good having a graphics engine which can run at terrific speeds but if it's a bugger to program your game is going to suffer because it makes it very expensive to do a lot of little effects. Mine will pay off. I can say I want smoke to come out of this crashing aircraft just by turning on a smoke-generator. Does that make sense? I make full use of the computers colours. In the World War One scenario for instance you get 'fogging', I suppose you could also call these depth-cueing, it's going to be mistiness. I want to get a quite unique look for the game. In terms of detail, you can actually see the propellers moving round.

VR TAKES OFF



Well, it's finally happened - and coin-ops will never be the same again. The world's first Virtual Reality coin-op made it on-site this month, to the ecstatic response of the general public. At least those of the general public that were lucky enough to be staying at SouthCoast World in sunny Bognor - for that is the place where the arcade industry finally made it into the 90s.

The Virtuality SD Unit, first covered in ACE late last year, has finally made it into the arcades after an impressive World launch at Wembley Conference Centre which included thunder-flashes, public address systems, autocues, all manner of coloured lights, video walls, video cameras and - the vital ingredient if you're to attract any journos at all - free booze.

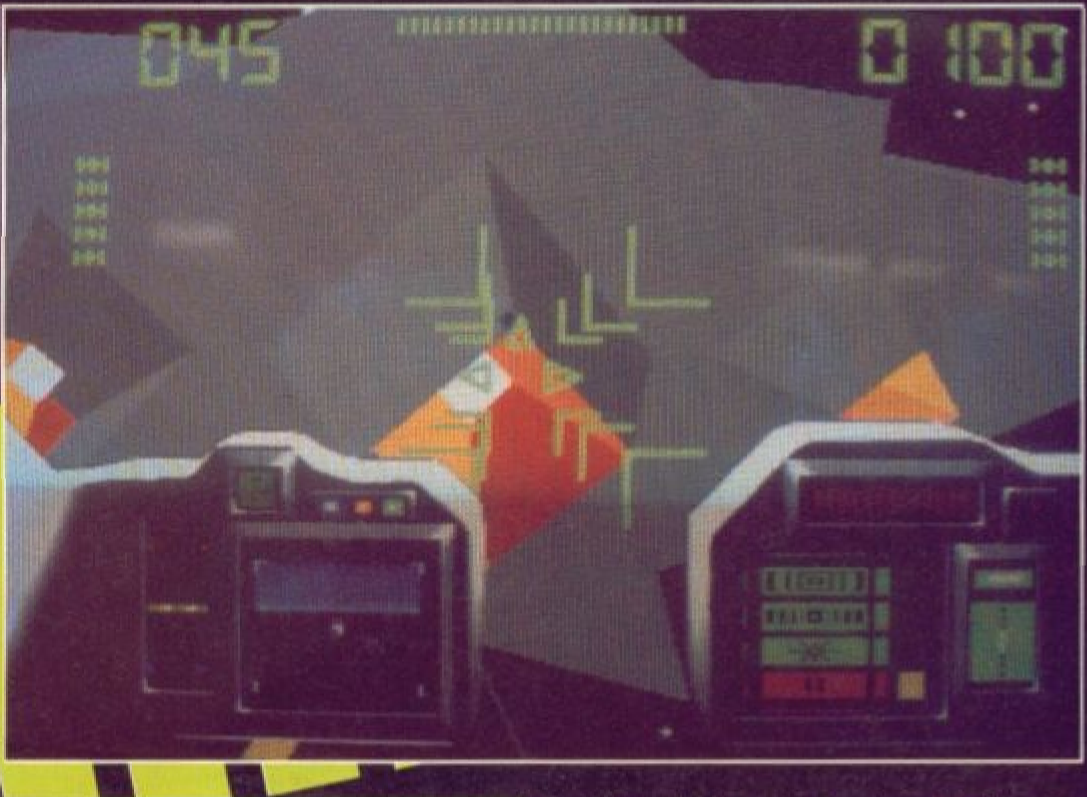
This all generated considerable razzmatazz, which rubbed itself off onto the normally cynical arcade community, who greeted the unveiling with more or less universal acclaim. And with ten units on show, just about everyone that wanted to got a go, hands-on. Or should that be helmet on?

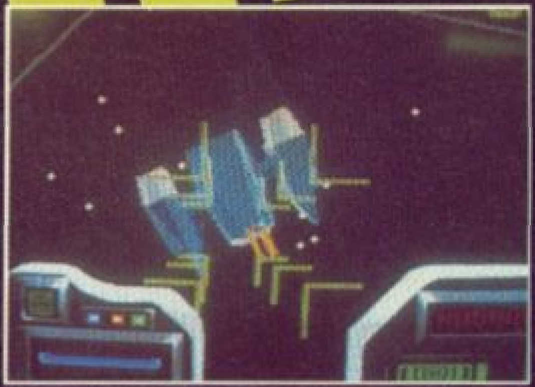
W Industries claim initial orders to be excellent, so chances are we'll be seeing these fabled units all around the country before very long. But is it really any good? If the punters' response is anything to go by, yes!

There are two games on offer for the Virtuality unit right now - one mainstream air combat game called *VTOL* and another more original title based in the true Space Opera tradition, *Battlesphere*.

VTOL first. Playing the game on Cadet level, the easiest, you are given limited aircraft dynamics - so you can't do anything spectacularly wrong. It's a question of zapping down waves of enemy fighters that appear in order to earn refuels, either mid-air jobs, rendezvousing with a C-120 Tanker (starting off automatic... then you have to do it yourself!), or by landing on a carrier or airfield.

Directional controls are on the right-hand joystick, along with the guided-missile trigger and ordinary cannon button. On the left joystick you have a simple forward-to-go-faster, back-to-go-slower action.





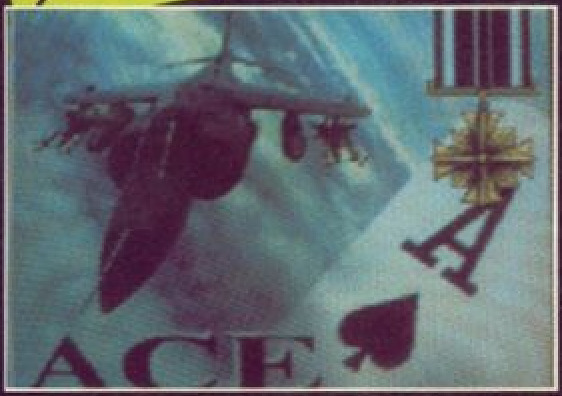
This in itself is impressive, with fast vector action, fractal landscape and bucketfulls of sampled speech, sound effects and a "Get-down! Hit me! Ouch!" *Top Gun* style CD soundtrack to top everything off.

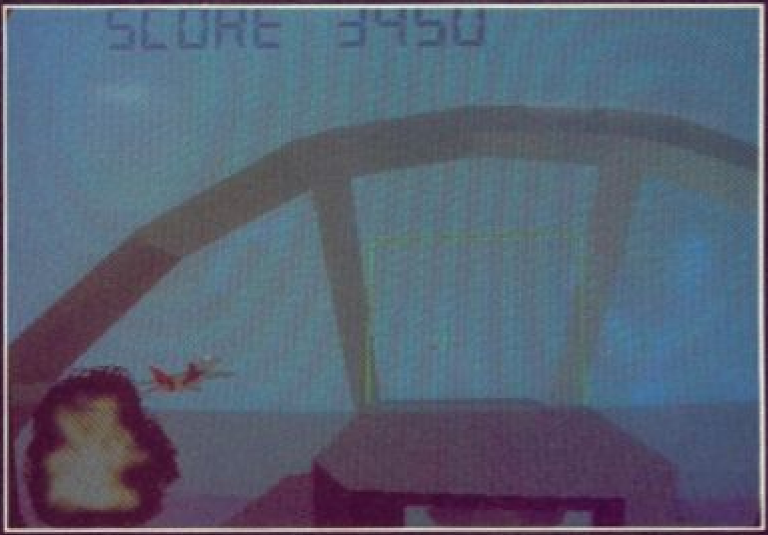
But once you've mastered Cadet level, there's Pilot and Ace levels that gradually bring in extra controls, extra tasks and extra grief in the form of some very intelligent enemy fighters. The flight model becomes realistic, refuelling and landing the plane becomes decidedly tricky and there's a big grandstand finish to aim for that WI aren't letting on about yet. There's also a Player vs Player level that will let you play head-to-head with up to 20 or so linked machines!

Some early players have called it comparable to being in a top-spec flight simulator - check it out for yourself! It certainly takes some getting over the conceptual wall that there is no screen - that you're inside the game universe itself!

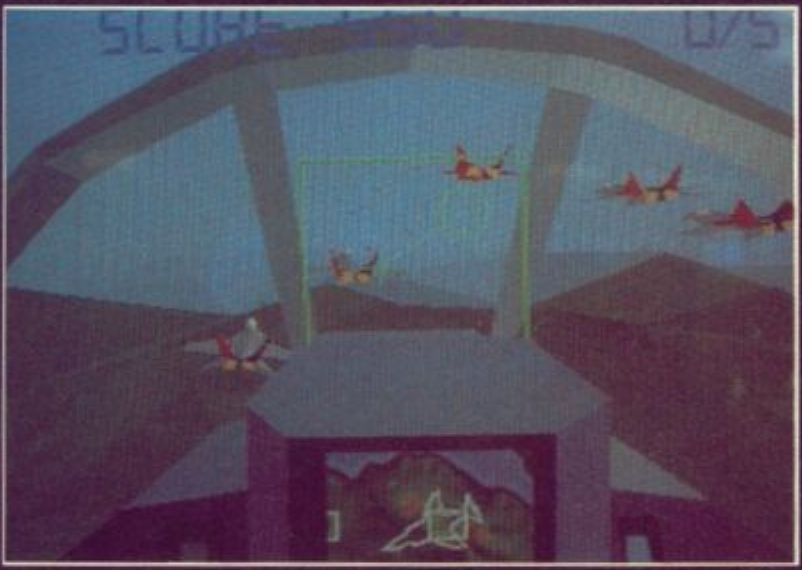
Battlesphere is the game that all sci-fi fans are going to freak over, because it lets you live out your wildest Luke Skywalker fantasies for real. This is a game set in a real 3-D universe. In Space, there's no up/down, left/right! There are a hell of a lot of alien fighter craft, however and they're all out to get, you!

In actual fact, they're defending their Mothership - and quite a Mother it is too. Unfortunately, you (or you plus a whole team of guys) have to travel over to it and take out all its laser ports (requiring considerable skill) and then skillfully fire a bomb into the depths of the main exhaust port. No worries, eh? Again, play happens in waves of aliens, with you getting increasingly more gametime if you manage to take out each successive wave.





With an ear-shattering boom an enemy jet explodes in a shower of shrapnel. One down, loads more to go.



(Above) The *VTOL* game in action. You're being buzzed by a whole squadron of enemy fighters. Cheeky (red?) devils! Lock-on with a heat-seeking missile and give 'em one right up the afterburner. As you can see, the Virtuality isn't afraid of shifting whole heaps of polygons in a fraction of a second.

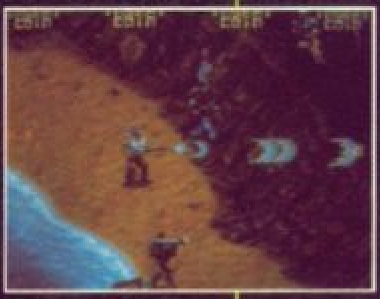
(Left) "Yeeeee-haaaaaa! You're all clear, kid. Now blow this thing and we can all go on." One sharp shot down the Battlesphere's exhaust port and the evil Empire's reign will be at an end.

What makes *Battlesphere* an outstanding game is its innovative use of the VR environment. Superimposed on your view in the headset is a head-up display that includes, not surprisingly, a gunsight. Move your head - and the gunsight moves too - that is, it's not linked to the direction of travel of your Pod. It's like have a laser stuck on the end of your nose, so you end up tracking alien fighters across space with your head in one direction, as you zoom towards the Mothership.

Different skill levels bring in different weapon types (laser, photon star and the infamous Chaos Bomb... drop one and see why!) and harder enemies, while you can either slug it out with a friend in *Asteroid Dogfight* (a Player vs Player mode) or even try and take out each others Motherships in the major *Battlesphere* level.

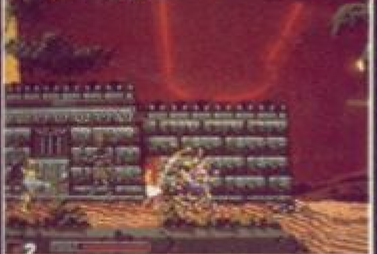
However, if you really feel like getting friendly, you and a friend can share a Pod, with one of you being the Gunner and the other being a Pilot.

Battlesphere has given me the best buzz from a game since I got good at *Defender* - which puts it straight up there in my top three ever, try it for yourself to see if it hooks you too!



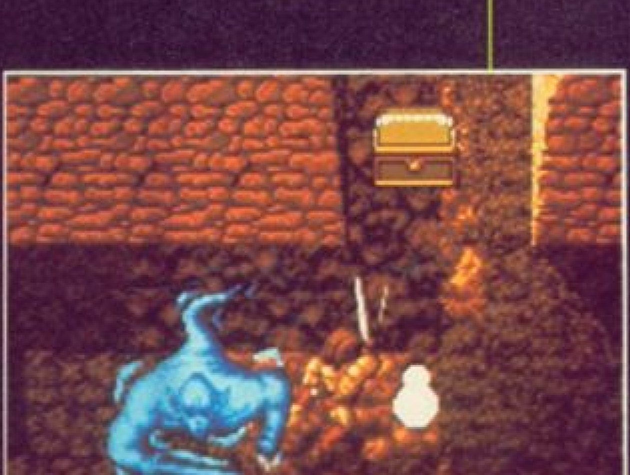
Thunder Force
- Capcom -

After the success of *Mercs* - playing to the would-be Arnies of this world - Capcom are now trying something of the same ilk, but for up to four players at a time. Nice graphics, good sound and some neat pallette effects should make this popular with proto-Commandos.



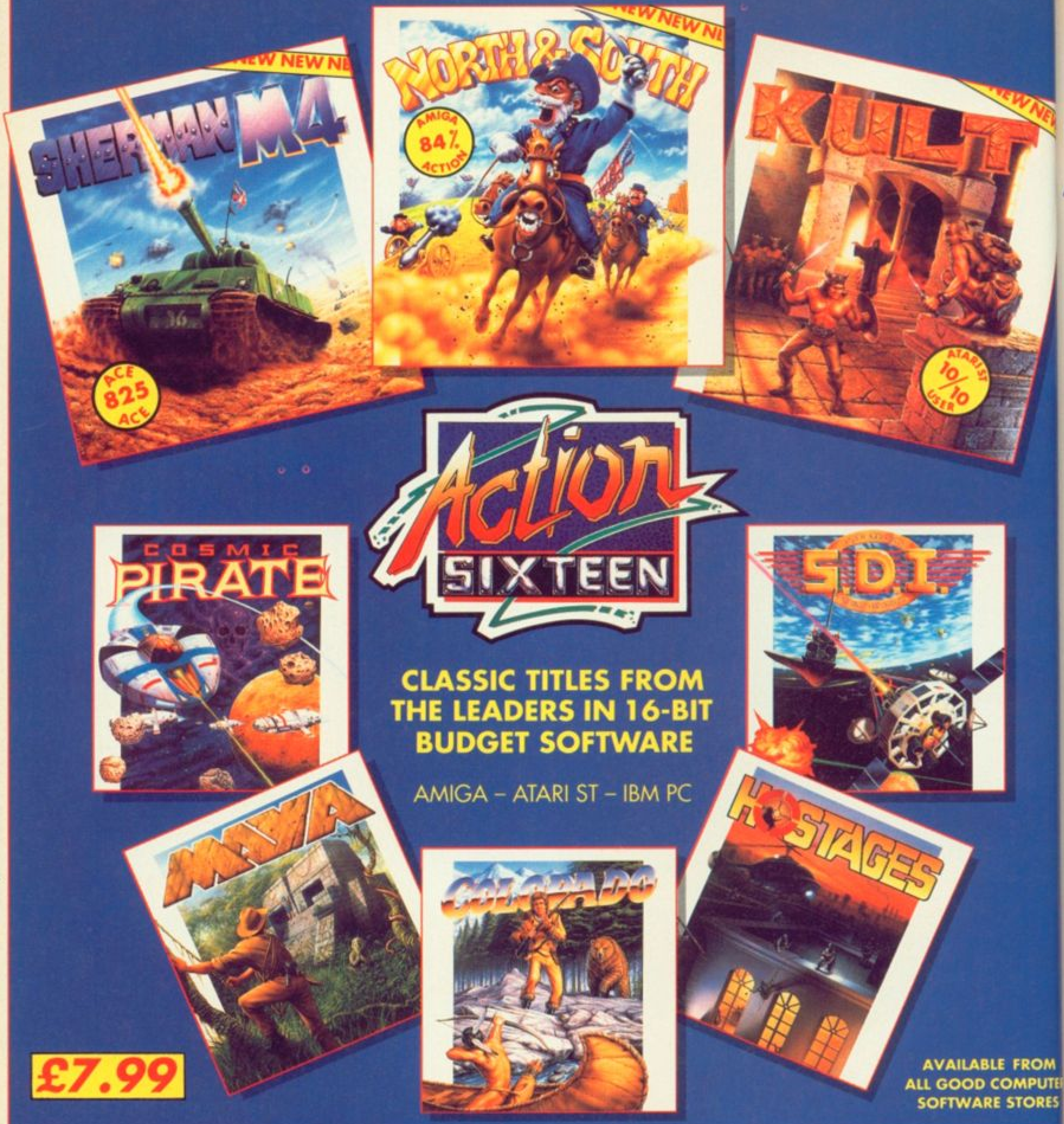
Big Karnak
- Gaelco -

A horizontal scrolly with jumpy-jumpy, shooty-shooty tendencies, set in Ancient Egypt. More of a puzzle element than many of its kind - and with more than adequate graphics - this one appears to trancend its genre. Sort of.



Vandyke
- Jaleco -

Well - it's Conan time, as your large, bare-chested (or should that be bear-chested) sprite scrolls vertically up the screen and hacks away at assorted Goblins, Kobolds, Cavemen, etc, etc. The top-down view works OK, but this is a bit of a filler rather than a major release from the increasingly cuddly Jaleco.


NEW NEW NE
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NEW NEW NE
NORTH & SOUTH
AMIGA 84% ACTION
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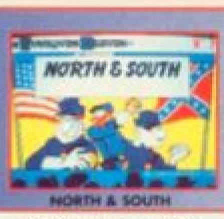
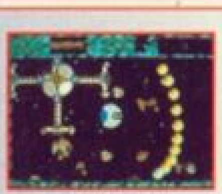

NORTH & SOUTH
NORTH & SOUTH

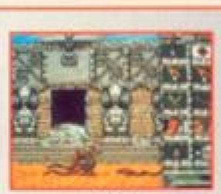
Witty, cartoon quality enactment of the American Civil War.

KULT

Quest for peace through temples in a hellish world.


COSMIC PIRATE

Perform daring and dangerous raids as you roam the galaxy.


MAYA

3D Jungle adventure searching for mysterious Mayan treasures.

COLORADO

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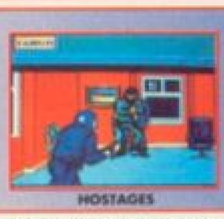
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Kult	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hostages	☐	☐	☐	☐
S.D.I.	☐	☐	☐	N/A
Rotor	☐	☐	☐	☐
Colorado	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Pirate	☐	☐	☐	☐
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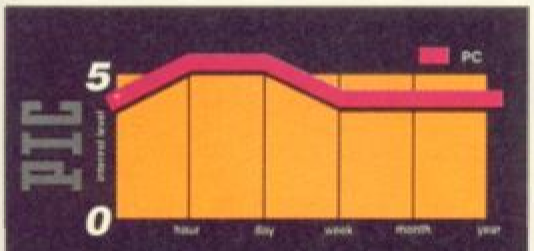
SCREEN TEST

Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers, otherwise known as Space Quest IV offers some enticing graphics and excellent adventuring to boot. Page 50

Gods from the Bitmaps. Intelligent monsters and excellent graphics, but does it offer anything *that* exciting?

IT TAKES ALL SORTS

And that fact is rarely more evident than when discussing games. One man's meat is more often than not another's poison. And when hyperbole and superlatives fill the air like so many noxious human emissions, it's easy to become desensitized to the real feel of the review. Here at ACE, we try to be a little more conservative in our approach. You won't find wasted words here. ACE reviews aim to be level headed and analytical. But that doesn't mean we don't get excited about the games we see. We simply make sure we get excited about the right ones.



The packaging and presention are mediocre, but after a few minutes the depth of gameplay really bites. Unfortunately a repetitive challenge means it's downhill from there on...

The PIC – *Predicted Interest Curve* – is the most sophisticated reviewing tool around.

The curve is divided into six sections, indicating the player's adrenalin level after one minute, one hour, one day, one week, one month, and one year. And this can tell you a lot more about a game than just the interest levels...

The minute, hour, and day ratings can tell you a lot too. If there's a dip here, followed by a rise, you've got a game that may take a bit of getting into. Alternatively, the graphics may put you off for a while until the gameplay starts to grip. Check out the PIC comment for more details.

- **Lots of cutesy characters**
- **Fascinating 3D sections.**
- **The two player link-up option for stage 16**

- **Twelve disks to swap!**
- **No colour on some stages**
- **No joystick or mouse control option**

We won't rate a game unless it represents what you'll find on the shelves. If a game's not finished, we won't rate it. Instead we give it an ACE Preplay verdict panel that tells you how we think it's shaping up. In most cases, a full review of the finished game will follow in a later issue.

ACE AWARDS

ACE always awards seals of approval for outstanding software performance. If a game really breaks the boundaries in sound, graphics, or originality you'll see the appropriate ACE Award flash on the review. Unless it's truly dire – in which case it'll get the ACE Turkey award. Software houses: you have been warned!

ACE only awards this one to games of outstanding quality. A 900+ game is a classic title, recommended without hesitation.

Originality counts for a lot these days, and any games that have it deserve a special mention. This ACE award is reserved specifically for these rare games.

One of the first things to grab you in a game is its graphics. Games that redefine the state-of-the-art get this seal of approval from ACE.

Sound is the 'forgotten' aspect of games – but can make or break them. ACE only awards this one to brilliant use of audio in a game.

THE LINE UP

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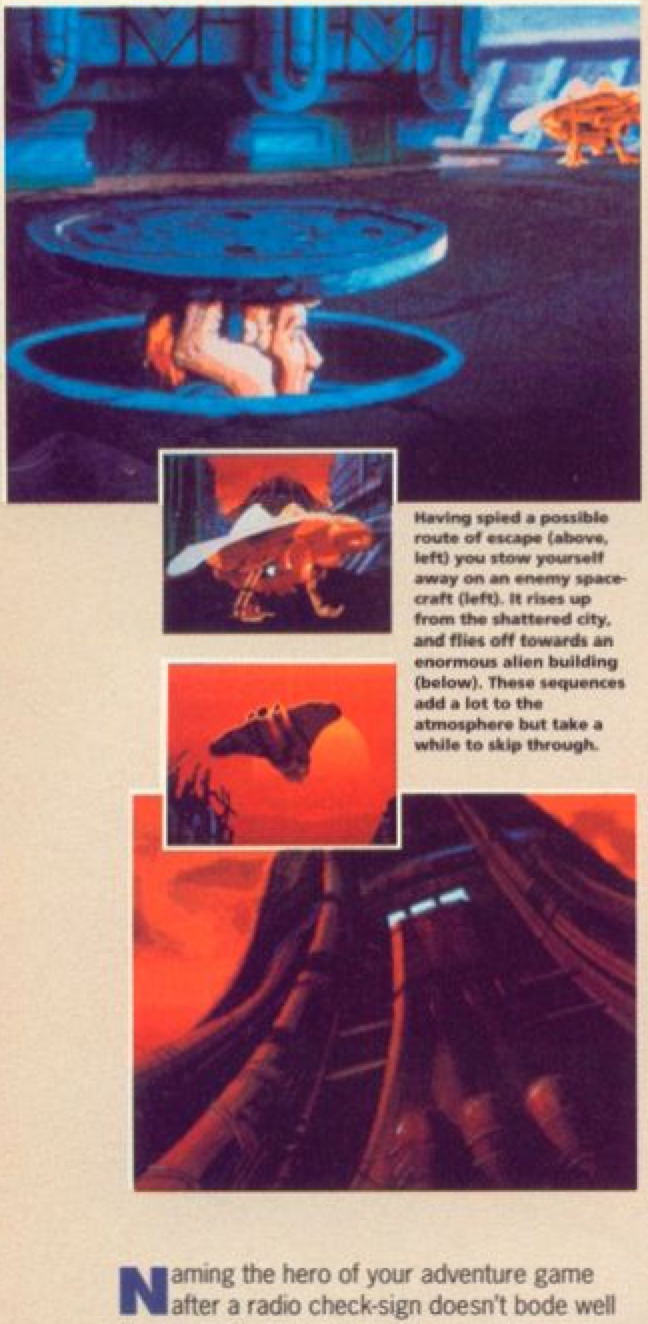


Having spied a possible route of escape (above, left) you stow yourself away on an enemy space-craft (left). It rises up from the shattered city, and flies off towards an enormous alien building (below). These sequences add a lot to the atmosphere but take a while to skip through.

SPACE QUEST IV

ROGER WILCO & THE TIME RIPPERS

SIERRA reaches new heights in goofball adventuring

Naming the hero of your adventure game after a radio check-sign doesn't bode well for a sustained level of amusement. However, that Roger Wilco has been around for a full four games now, and his latest excursion is a more lavish and incredible trip than any before must indicate that the joke has some considerable legs.

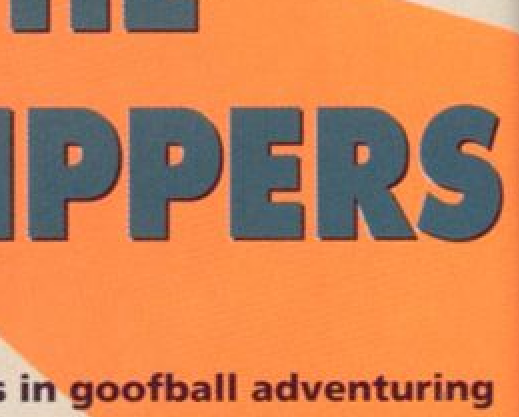
Wilco, inept janitor and reluctant space hero, is confronted in a seedy bar by the *Blake's 7* lookalike Sequel Police. No ordinary constabulary these, once in the parking lot it emerges their intentions are strictly for Roger's demise. It looks as if Roger's goose is cooked, and only the swift actions of the friendly Time Rippers enable him to escape.

And so, after a lengthy intro sequence, Roger finds himself dropping through the other end of the time rip into - urk! - *Space Quest XII!* His home planet has been virtually destroyed by the evil Vohaul and is on the brink of collapse. Staring mutants wander the darkened streets. Burned out vehicles lie abandoned and useless, riddled with laser-fire. What has happened? How can Roger get back to the, er, adventure? And what is that pink fluffy rabbit doing?

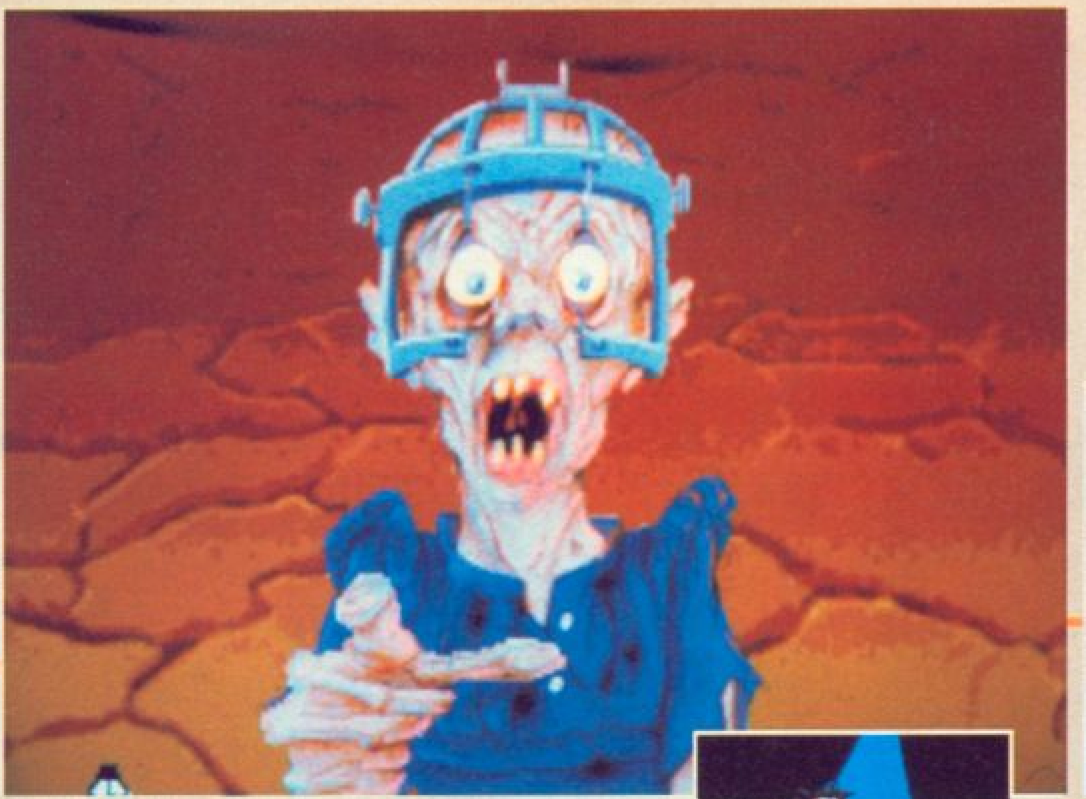
Controlled exclusively with point-and-click commands, Roger moves reasonably freely through his environment, examining, touching and collecting objects, talking to characters he encounters etc. The two most immediate points of note are that (a) the graphics are astonishing, and (b) Roger gets killed an awful lot.

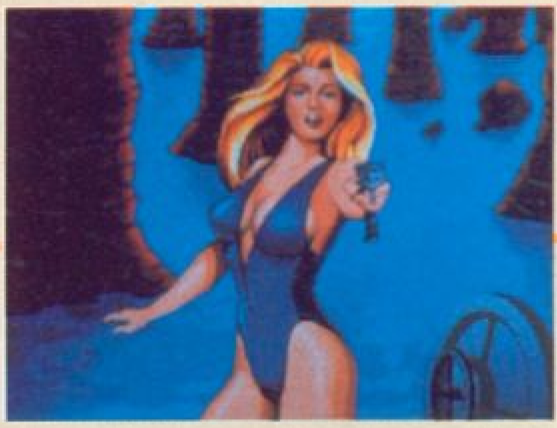
It's a rough old life for a space hero these days. Continual raids by the Sequel Police intent on Roger's discovery, deadly oozing slime down in the sewers, unstable explosives, and that's all in the first ten locations!

Avoiding these untimely ends obviously takes a bit of practise, but Roger will rarely come unstuck without some foolishness on your part. Dangerous situations are always clearly explained, and thanks to an excellent user-interface, the game can be saved in virtually any position with the minimum fuss. Even in move-



Wandering the deserted streets are cyborg mutants, programmed by the Sequel Police and their evil controller to locate resistance forces and convey their location back to HQ. By the time you see him, your game is virtually over.





(Left) Restrained in a space-chair by two buxom captors, Roger must think on his feet lest he loses more than his trousers.

(Below) Much nicer scenery than in *Space Quest XII*, although no less threatening.

(Right) The most fiendish torture of all, a deadly HAIR REMOVER! (Below right) Cross-dressing may seem like a bit of a come-down for a top-flight space hero, but such indignities must be endured. (Bottom) Work in the *leisure age* is limited, and making a buck is far from easy. There's always work in the burger bars.

critical situations, a Save can be used without taking up precious game turns.

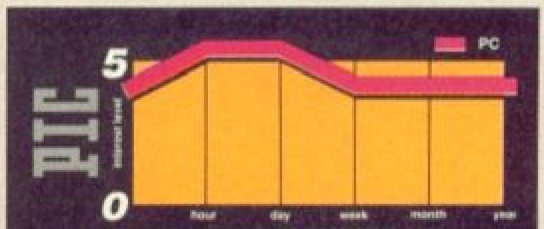
Aside from the graphics which in places are quite awe-inspiring, textual descriptions for all major items in the game are included. Thankfully, no cop-out "I can see nothing of interest here" messages are included. The only negative point to make is that since the designers have gone into such detail, it's sometimes a bit difficult to identify what are 'useful' objects and what are simply background features.

Speech is the area where the player has the least control. The player can click his "talk" icon on any character in the game, which may or may not initiate a dialogue. The player can't tell Roger what to say. Instead, the computer feeds Roger lines appropriate to his current situation. Go into a gent's retailers without any trousers on, and Roger will have a discussion about buying some. This format works better than you may expect.

The back-and-forth nature of time-travel games can usually turn into a pain in the neck, jaunting all over the place to try and effect events before they happen and the like. Here the path is quite linear, in a flexible sort of way. Rather than offering enormous areas to explore and get lost in, the player is for the most part kept in a suite of around ten locations, and forced to concentrate on the problem in hand, before moving onto the next zone.

Indeed, the nature of the puzzles is pretty solid. On finding yourself in an apparently dead-end situation, the answer will usually be close at hand. In that sense, *Space Quest IV* is an immensely fair game, allowing the player in theory to play through all the puzzles first time round, without learning too many costly lessons. This doesn't mean the game is easy - far from it - but it helps dispel irrational fears that maybe if you were to retrace two-days effort and get the bunny it would help you fly the space ship, for no better reason other than it's the only object you aren't holding.

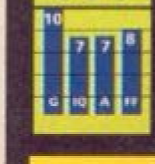
Occasionally the game will demand that an event has happened which will make Roger 'know' something before allowing another occurrence. For example, in the Galaxy Galleria Mall, Roger (for a number of reasons) needs to



An excellent sci-fi romp. Quick-paced and quick witted, the action seldom grinds to a halt, and for an intentionally funny game it manages to maintain a decent level of tension too. Even when you're stuck in a dead-end, there are enough jokes to keep you amused.

ACE RATING

880



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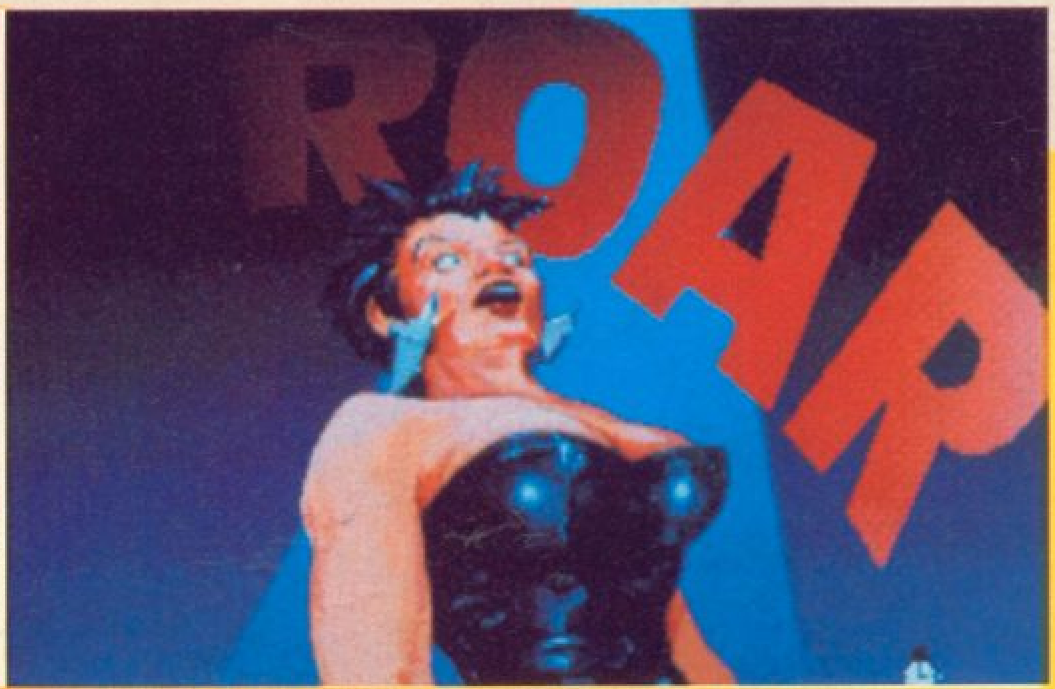


Space Quest IV's top-notch graphics are a far cry from those found in adventure games only a short time ago. Hefty hard-disk access and some irritating waits are part and parcel of the deal, and playing off floppy disks is really out of the question.

get dressed up as a woman. The first time I played, after dithering around the mall for a bit, I found myself presented with a helpful shop assistant and was into my slinky-black number and wig in no time. However, after coming unstuck and reloading, my visit to the boutique was in vain, and I couldn't get served to save my life. Since I presumed I needed the disguise to get past the burly security guard on the door, it didn't occur to me that I had to try to try to use the Autobucks Teller Machine before attempting to buy the dress. The teller machine does a visual identity check, you see, triggering the helpfulness or otherwise of the assistant in the boutique.

The self-referential nature of the plot makes for good reading and easy ironies. A particular favourite of mine is the option to travel back in time to *Space Quest 1*, and have Super-VGA Roger wandering around the excellent throwback graphics of his first adventure. Black and white hoodlums even threaten to chase Rog and his fancy-boy 256-colour ways out of town. And if you think that's convoluted, how about going to visit a software store in the future selling (among other things) a working electronic tip book for... *Space Quest IV*.

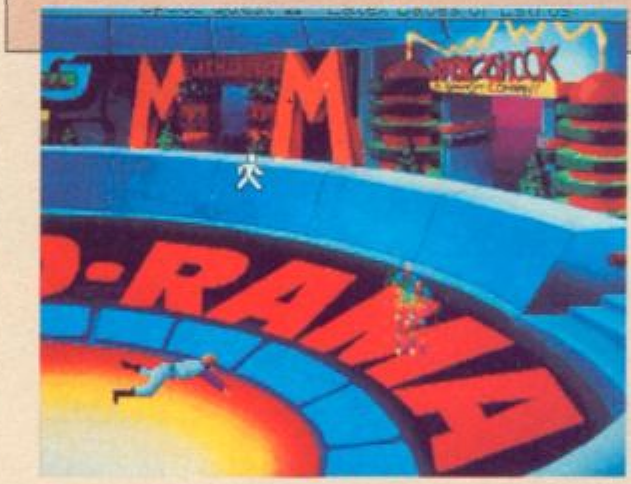
Dramatic scenes are handled well, although they may verge too much on the *Dragon's Lair* style for some gamers. There are instances where lengthy scenes of animation precede a brief opportunity for you to act. Miss the chance or try the wrong option and Roger will invariably buy it. Again, however, the save-at-any-time makes it possible to jump right back into the action at the critical moment should your choice prove incorrect.

There's no doubt, though, that *Space Quest IV* is a deep, challenging and entertaining adventure, gaining a lot from doing away with a type-in parser and concentrating on the team's graphic and storytelling abilities.

● **Jim Douglas**

...A THOUSAND WORDS

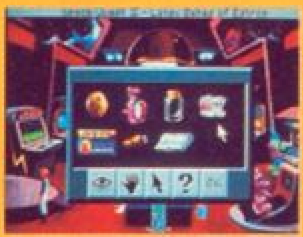
One of *SQ IV*'s novel features is the graphics handler. Rather than being constrained to a particular single-screen location, Roger can enjoy enormous panoramic views of his environment! By walking to the edge of certain screens, Roger triggers a scroll revealing his new location and how it connects with the last. Although far from smooth, it genuinely adds to the feeling of realism. Almost intentionally I suspect, the technique is first used in a far from inspiring manner, scrolling around dingy little tunnels in an underground sewer. However, it's second use in an enormous space-hanger and third on a breath-taking alien world are quite stunning.



The Skate-o-Rama in the Galaxy Galleria Mall is a fine place to go shopping, but it isn't getting the adventure solved, is it?

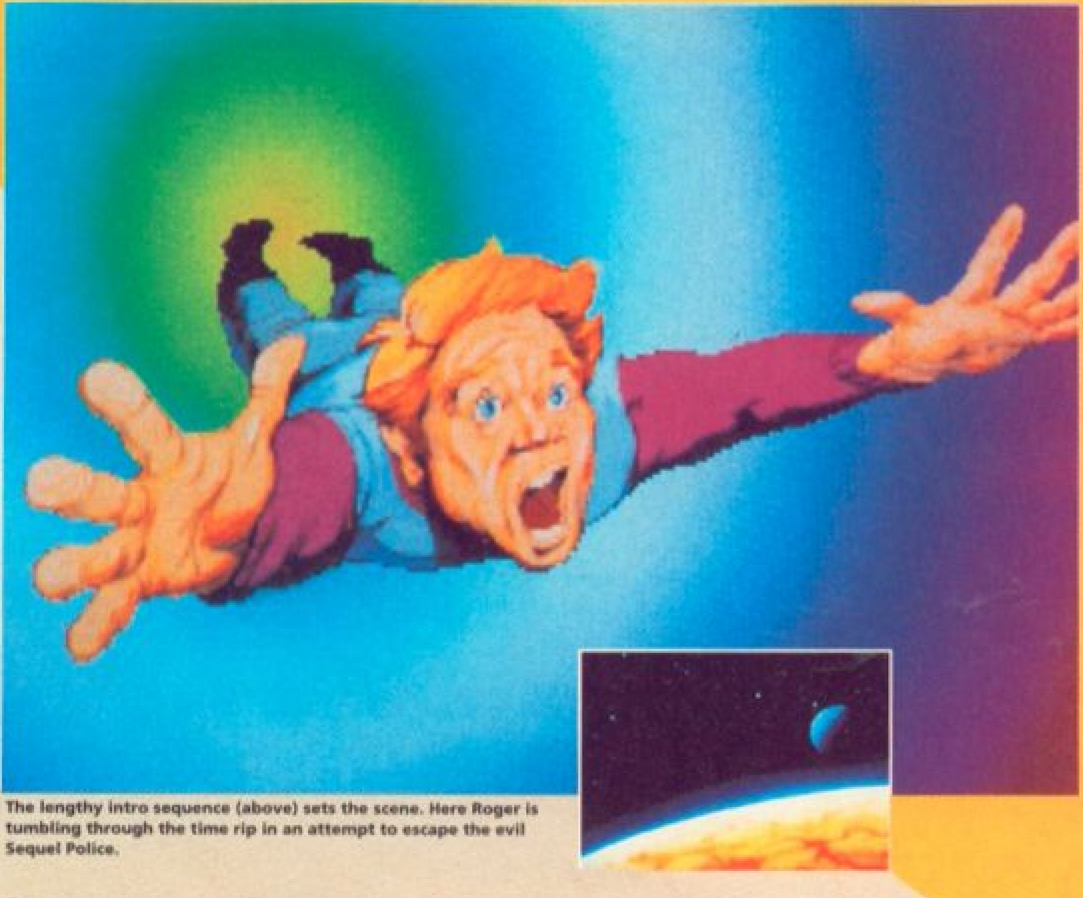
The entrance to the Sequel Police headquarters is a far from hospitable place.

(Left) Inside the landing bay. These policemen aren't the sort of whom you ask the time.



Your inventory screen (left) offers a handy user-interface with the bits and bobs you're currently carrying. Descriptions of the objects can be accessed too.

BARGAINS!
Done
BOOM



The lengthy intro sequence (above) sets the scene. Here Roger is tumbling through the time rip in an attempt to escape the evil Sequel Police.

EXTRA! EXTRA!

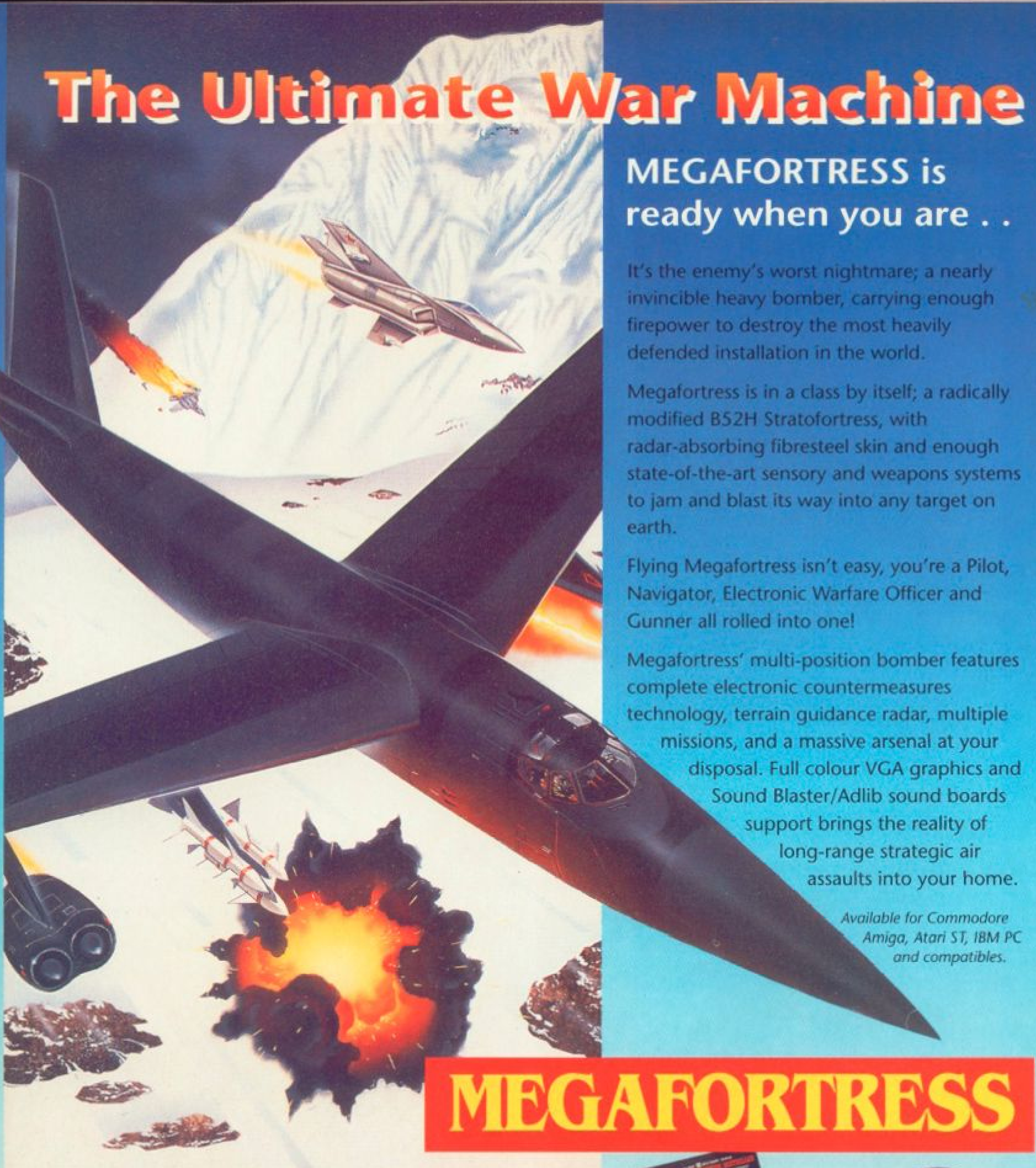
Sierra games have a reputation for offering pretty good value for money. This rep is achieved not least by the inclusion of several glossy games-related manuals in the package. *Space Quest IV* is no exception, containing an extremely useful copy of *Space Piston* magazine, a sort of digest for all riders of the space-lanes.

Of course, aside from the feeling of completeness felt by the user when in possession of the whole package, the mixture of entertaining nonsense and games tips (virtually unintelligible until you face a particular problem) gives the player even stronger encouragement to buy the original for himself.

Shops and items advertised in *Space Piston* actually exist in the game, and can be extremely useful if found.

***Piston* also contains the copy-protection and a play-through of the first few locations, all presented in top-quality magazine-of-the-future format.**

The Ultimate War Machine



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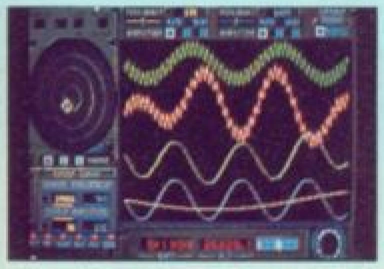
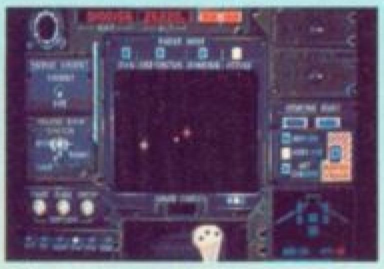
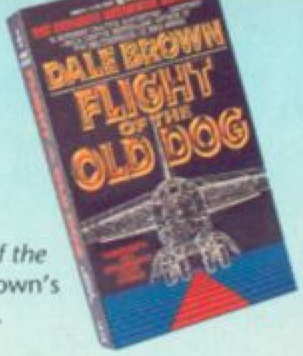


Electronic Countermeasures

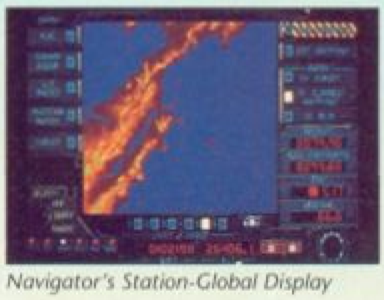


Offensive Weapons Station

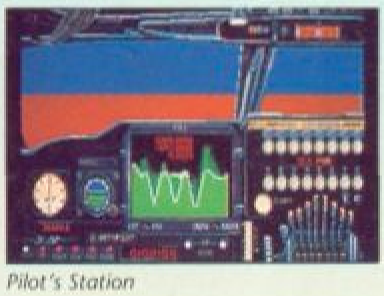
Based on *'Flight of the Old Dog'*, Dale Brown's best selling novel.



THREE-SIXTY



Navigator's Station-Global Display



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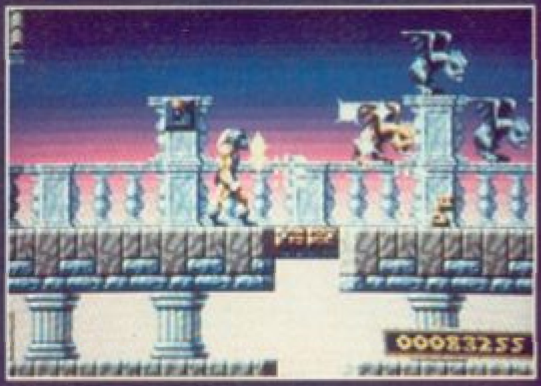
GODS

RENEGADE take you to Hell and back in their latest release

ACE TrailBlazer



Ah, births. Difficult times for all concerned, especially when this is your first child. While the Bitmap Brothers strain and grunt in a sealed room, all Renegade can do is nervously pace the corridor, chain-smoke like crazy and wait, wait, wait...

Gods is a multi-directional scrolling arcade adventure, where you must guide a hunky hero through a hazardous quest to slay the vile Lord of the Underworld. Your epic journey will take you through four distinct regions, a ruined Greek city, an ancient temple, the tombs below and finally Hell, each split into three sub-levels packed with ugly monsters, valuable treasure, sneaky traps, secret rooms and cunning puzzles.

Mid-way and at the end of each level there's the ancient Greek version of the shopkeeper from *Xenon 2*, where, cash permitting, you can buy a wide selection of weaponry (daggers, shooting stars, fireballs, etc), plus loads of special icons like invulnerability shields, monster freezers and smart bombs.

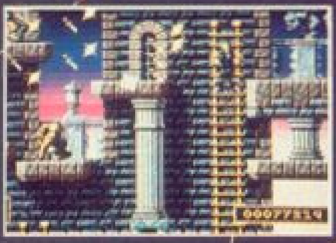
And you'll need all the help you can get, especially when you reach the end of a level, because that's where you'll have to face a huge guardian which will do its best to make sure you go no further.

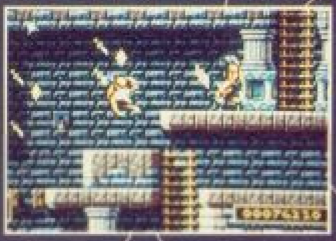
Now, now, stifle that yawn. Admittedly the Bitmaps win no prizes for originality, but they've done for arcade adventures what they did for shoot-'em-ups with *Xenon 2*, i.e. take all the best ideas from other games and then add that extra something special to lift it head and shoulders above the rest.

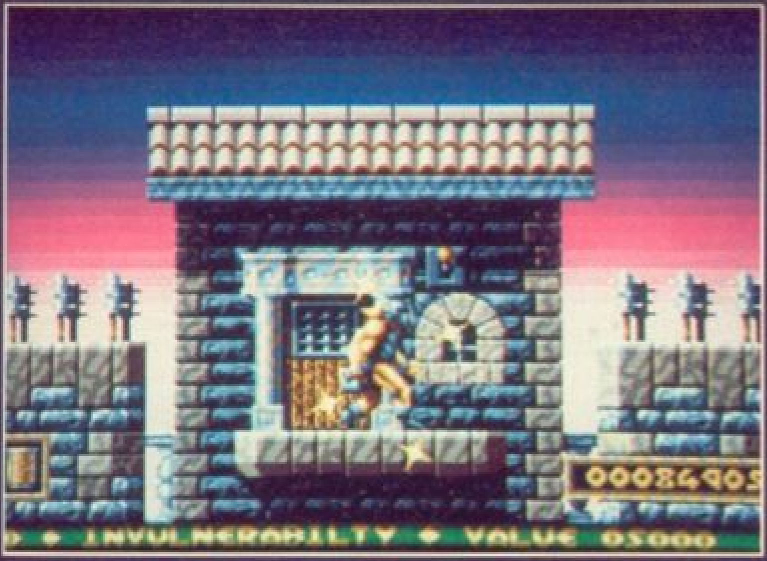
So what is that 'something special'? Well, for a start the monsters have been kitted out with state-of-the-art brains. On the first few sub-levels the creatures are as thick as so many short planks, but it's not long before they're hunting you down, avoiding your shots, nicking magic

(*below*) One of the most satisfying aspects of Gods (from a hack 'n' slay point of view) is the number of weapons you can lob about. It won't be long before you've picked up enough hardware to become a veritable one-man army.

(*bottom*) Another intelligent alien - this ones after your blood, and hops up and down the platforms in pursuit. Bah! These new-fangled intelligence routines. I can remember the good old days when baddies WERE baddies, and just trundled mindlessly left and right on preset routes.

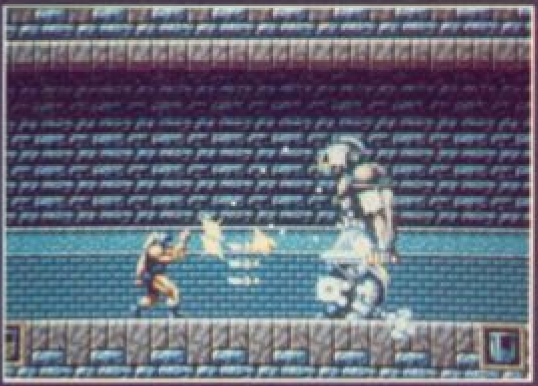


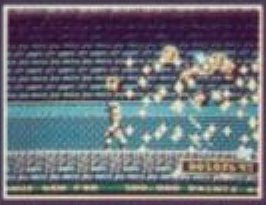




(far left) The Bitmaps have packed Gods full of secret rooms, bonuses and surprises. At first these gargoyles look like innocuous stone statues, then one-by-one they come to life and home in! Aaargh! Pulling the lever causes a shield icon to appear, which promptly drops through the simultaneously-opened trapdoor. Race to pick it up because it's the only way you'll survive the long, long drop to...

(left)...The entrance to a bonus room. Inside are riches beyond the dreams of avarice - provided you remembered to pick up the correct door key along the way.

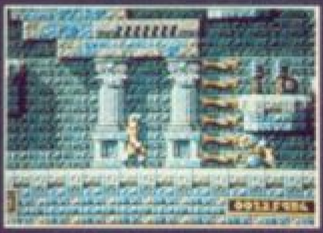


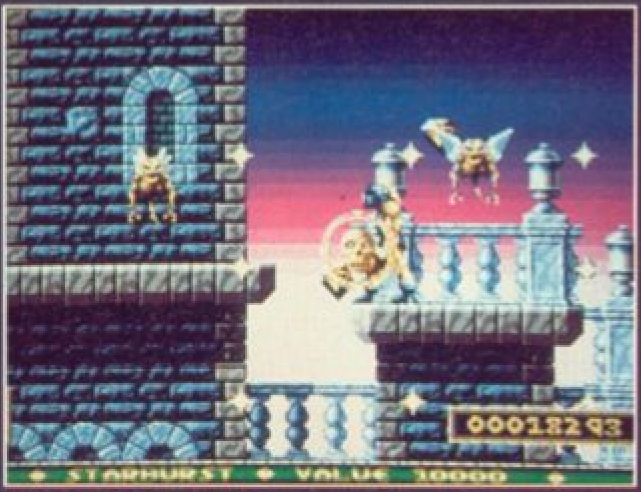


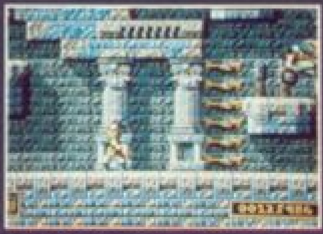
(above and left) The first end-of-level baddy is this giant warrior (remember Talos from the film *Jason and the Argonauts*). Whatever you do STAY AWAY FROM THAT SWORD! The fullness (or otherwise) of the jars at the bottom of the screen indicate how much energy you (left jar) and the centurion (right jar) have left...

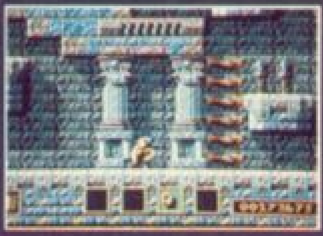
...In a shower of sparks and stars the centurion finally keels over, revealing bags of goodies for the taking. Don't let all that cash burn a hole in your pocket - the shop's just around the corner.

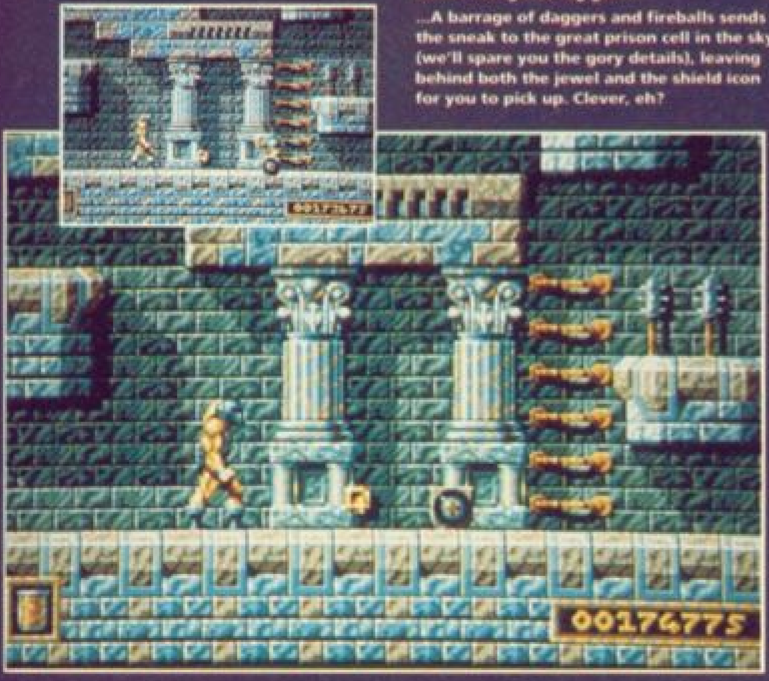
(left) There's no time to relax and take in that gorgeous sky - you're under attack once again, this time by a swarm of harpies.











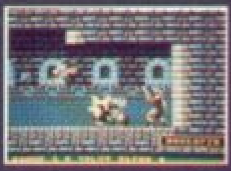
(left *top to bottom*)
A puzzle. There's a shield icon, but it's guarded by lethal spikes. How can you get it? Ah-ha! Here comes a thief monster...

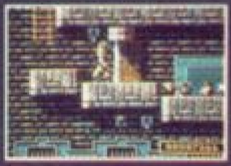
...Up he hops, through the spikes, and grabs the bonus. Oi, come back!...

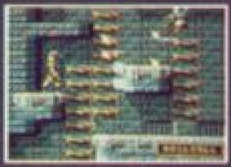
...It's going to take more than kind words to encourage the avaricious little *#!! to come down from his perch. Select a shiny bauble from your inventory and drop it...

...The thief can't resist, and jumps down to snatch the glittering gem...

...A barrage of daggers and fireballs sends the sneak to the great prison cell in the sky (we'll spare you the gory details), leaving behind both the jewel and the shield icon for you to pick up. Clever, eh?



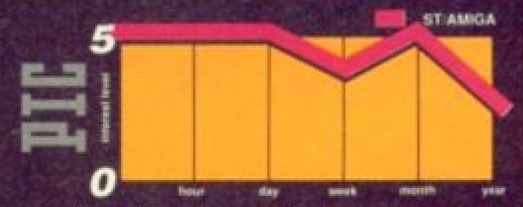




(top) Will you ever find peace? This is World 2 of Level 1, and your task is to take that vase to the pottery - only then will the World Key be revealed.

(middle) The risks in deviating from the easy path are many but so are the rewards. Who knows? You may discover a treasure room like this one, stuffed full of lucre.

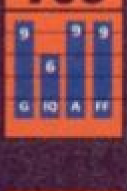
(bottom) This flyer is pretty tricky to eliminate. He flits about, trying to dodge your shots, then darts in for the kill.



The difficulty has been pitched just right. The first couple of worlds are relatively easy (though no pushovers), but provide a finely-judged tuition in the job ahead. Only after you've been playing for a while will you discover that Gods packs considerable depth beneath its hack-'em-up facade, encouraging you to return again and again.

ACE RATING

908

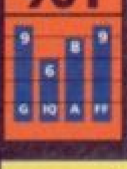


AMIGA

The Amiga version's ST roots are slightly visible: the scrolling is a tad 'chunky', but the Amiga's superior hardware has been used to smooth out the ride (the scroll rate never drops below 17 frames per second), making for a more enjoyable playing experience. Sound is stunning - the hero grunts and pants with exertion, monsters roar and scream as they breathe their last and the sound cues for activating switches, such as trapdoors opening, spikes moving, etc, are superbly realistic.

ACE RATING

901



ATARI ST

The graphics and full-screen scrolling are amazing, and just show what the all-too-frequently belittled ST can do in the hands of a good programmer. Sound is great too, although understandably not up to the Amiga's standard. Whether you're into monster hackin' or whether you're into brain wrackin', Gods is for you.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.53	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.53	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£TBA	JUNE

items and generally being a big nuisance.

Then there are the puzzles. Tripping switches and pressing pressure pads in certain orders can reveal all sorts of surprises, not all of them pleasant. Sound effects are cleverly used to give audio clues to off-screen events, such as a switch causing a distant trapdoor to open.

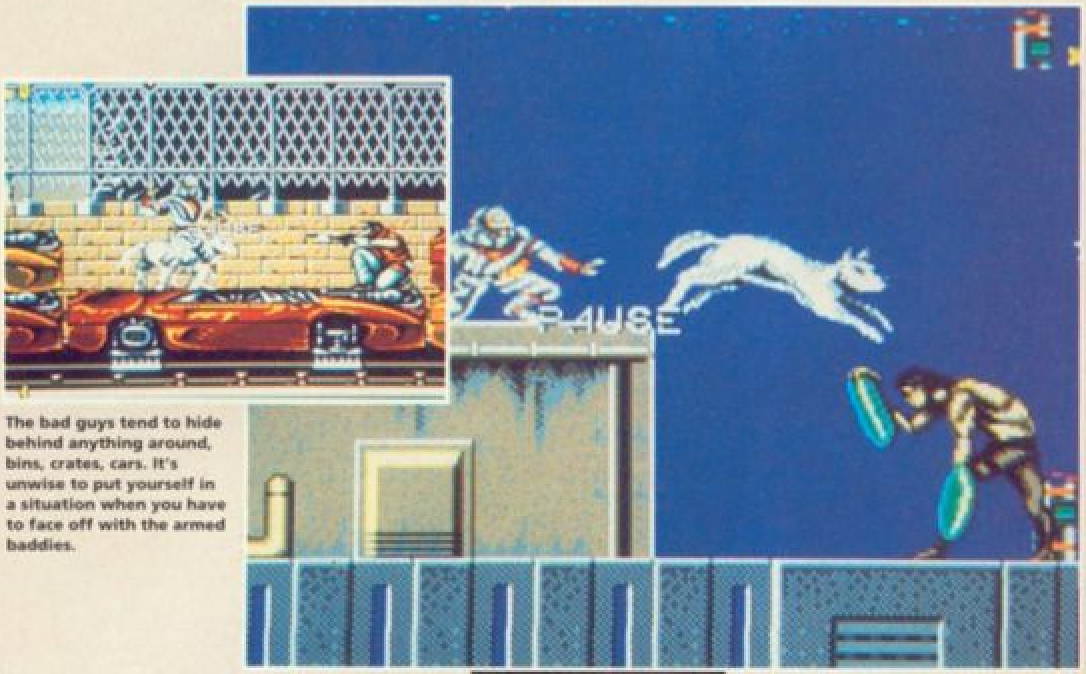
There's a genuine thrill in playing through an area a hundred times then spotting a slightly different wall area concealing a switch which, when toggled, unveils a secret bonus-packed room.

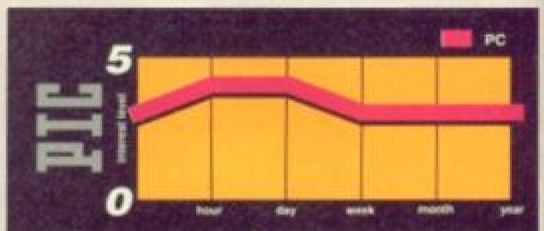
Last but certainly not least are the game's graphics. They're a wonder to behold, and the scrolling is excellent for an ST. The Amiga scrolling is better than the ST's but not on par with, say, *Turrican II*'s - but then *Turrican II* didn't have *Gods'* depth of gameplay.

Now for the carping niggles. All control, including movement, firing, toggling switches and picking up and dropping objects, is via the joystick. It's a little fiddly at first, but not annoyingly so, and you'll soon have the hang of it. The hero also takes his time turning from left to right and vice versa, which can be frustrating when you're being attacked from both sides. But neither of these faults in any way ruin the gameplay of what is undeniably an enjoyable product of great depth.

Congratulations, Renegade. Go down the pub and buy all your mates a pint and a fat cigar: your first child is a healthy bouncy bundle of joy.

● **Richard Evans**


The bad guys tend to hide behind anything around, bins, crates, cars. It's unwise to put yourself in a situation when you have to face off with the armed baddies.



Hardly an overwhelming first impression, though things certainly improve the further into the levels you get. Controls are pretty simple, but the ability to send the dog off to weaken the opposition works quite well. Not a firecracker, but fun none-the-less.

ACE RATING
740

G 7
IQ 3
A 5
FF 7

AMIGA

Not especially colourful, and certainly not a masterpiece of animation, *Shadow Dancer* offers some reasonable fun, but certainly shouldn't be top of your list this month.

RELEASE DETAILS		
AMIGA	£24.99	June
ATARI ST	£24.99	June

SHADOW DANCER

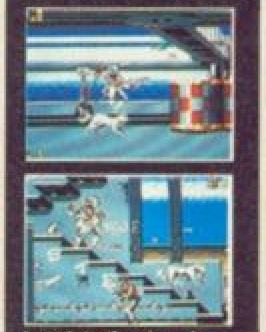
US GOLD offer us a fierce duo if there ever was one; a man in a sheet and his pet dog.

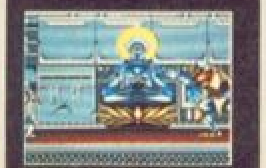
Although the novelty of the ninja may have worn dangerously thin, *Shadow Dancer* at least offers a novel twist on the theme. This time, the deadly hooded assassin under your control must scour a cityscape, seeking out and defusing deadly high-explosive devices. Your mission is hindered by hordes of drug-crazed miscreants intent on your downfall.

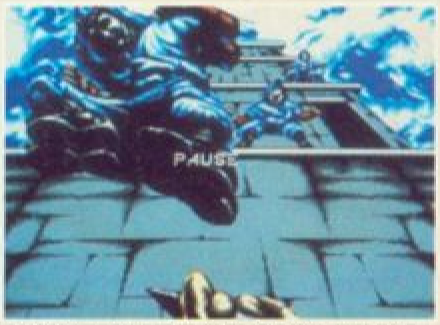
Indeed, the foes you face are so ferocious and number so highly, that one ninja alone - no matter how tough - wouldn't be able to defeat them all. Enter a monstrous icey-white dog; your pet and fellow battler for the Good.

Each level has a number of bombs, all must be located and touched (thus defusing them) before you can successfully progress to the next level. As well as the rank and file bad guys, extra-special hardmen are assigned to protect the bombs, and you'll need to plan your attack carefully for each one.

Armed with both a sword (for close quarters combat) and an unlimited supply of throwing stars, you can deal with most bad guys easily. They'll fall away like so much chopped liver under a hail of the spinning steel stars. However, contact with any of the bad guys or any of their bullets (yes, they're armed too) will cause your warrior to conk out and return to the start of the stage.


Leap into the air and blast away with your deadly spinning stars. Or alternatively, you can send your dog ahead to do your dirty work.


Using your apocalyptic Ninja Power, end-of-level guardians can be dispensed with ease.


The bonus stage is actually graphically superior to the rest of the game, looking akin to a comic book.

Many of the baddies lurk in shielded positions, behind crates and barrels which will halt your shiruken. In order to get at them, your hound can be sent ahead on an arm-savaging mission. While fighting off the toothsome advances of the canine, your intended victim stands up from behind whichever object they're currently hiding, enabling a clear shot to be taken.

Inevitably, the dog will come off badly every now and again, but rather than being reduced to a yelping bloodied mess, it simply turns into a miniature version of itself, useless in any fight for a short period of time.

Bonus stages between the levels offer extra-lives for proficient players. Peculiarly, the graphics in the bonus stage are considerably more attractive than those in the main game, like the exaggerated perspective-view up the side of a towering pagoda, with enemy warriors hurling themselves down at you. Guiding your screen-arm left and right to aim, you must fling the deadly shiruken upwards, killing the ninjas on their way down.

Depending on the size of your own collection, this particular Ninja offering may well prove worthwhile. Even if you're overloaded with fighting product, the canine slant will probably offer enough novelty value to justify purchase.

●**Jim Douglas**

THE 1990 ATARI ST PRODUCT GUIDE

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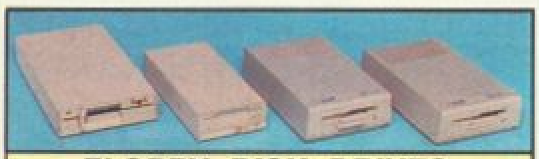
FLOPPY DISK DRIVES

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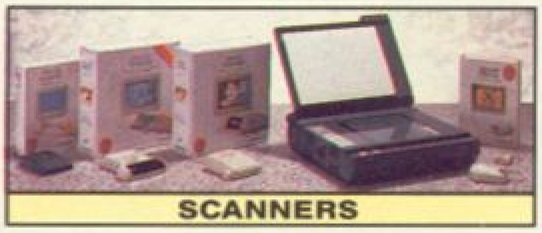
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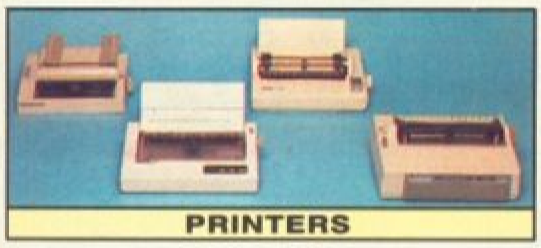
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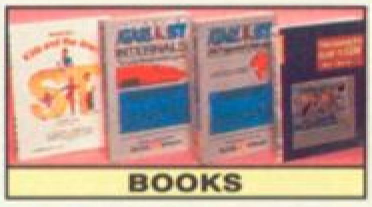
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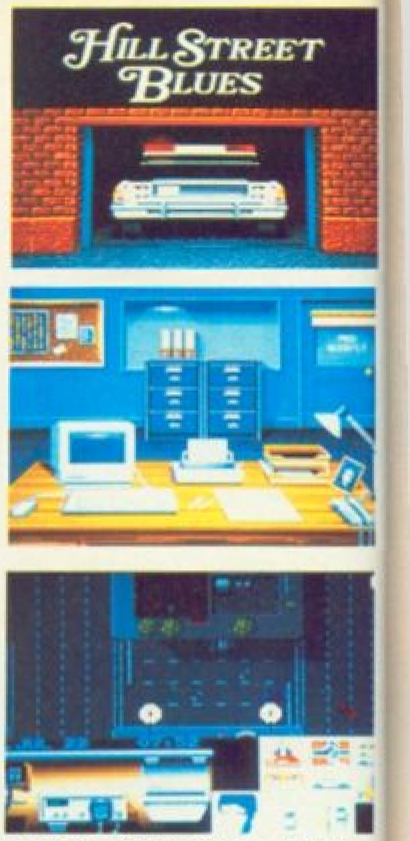
Hill Street Blues

KRISALIS get the street beat in their new TV show licence

(Below)
Pounding the beat on foot isn't the quickest way to get to the scene of a crime, but once there it allows you to act faster.
(Bottom)
Calling up the map while overseeing an officer allows them to be sent between locations more quickly.



(Above top) The intro features a faithful rendition of the TV show's tune and opening.
(Above middle) Furillo's office. From here you can access a precinct map and check out various statistics on the computer.
(Above bottom) Hill Street by night. The game has full day and night cycles, with the citizens going to work etc, just like real life.

If you have ever wondered - while watching the TV exploits of Renko, Bates and Hunter - what it takes to police a tough downtown neighbourhood, here's your chance to find out.

You take on the role of Captain Frank Furillo of the Hill Street Precinct, who has to keep his popularity up and the crime rate down by efficiently supervising his highly trained team of professionals and thus protecting the public from pickpockets, muggers, drug dealers, armed robbers, vicious killers and other unpleasant characters one wouldn't like to meet personally. But simply rounding up the bad guys isn't enough; once arrested they must be found guilty and successfully sentenced by the Court of Law.

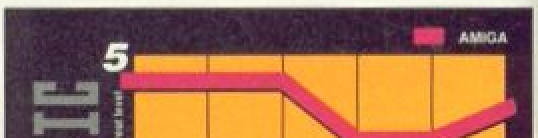
The game starts with a flashy film-like intro sequence complete with digitised pictures of all the officers at your disposal and mellow title tune. Prior to beginning your mission you are asked to choose the language version and the difficulty level (though even at the easiest setting I found it hard to imagine anyone other than a 21st Century cyborg supercop managing to keep the soaring crime rate down).

The main game screen is split into three areas: a birds-eye view of the Hill Street Precinct; a set of control icons; and either a radio operator giving you details of the latest crimes being committed, a car dashboard or a police belt indicating your current form of transport.

Command of all your officers' actions is via pointing-and-clicking on icons with the mouse. You can access the main police computer for the latest crime and officer statistics information, display a map of the area, send an officer to a destination on foot or by patrol car, take manual control over a selected officer, use numerous radio facilities, examine any citizen's record, set up road blocks and warn, arrest or shoot (check out the hilarious sound effect!) criminal suspects.

Before setting off on your mission you should spend some time not only studying the map of the area but also the actual reconnaissance patrols. Like most strategic games success depends on a well-planned approach to all tasks, ever-readiness and quick decision-making. It would be also a good idea to practice your mouse skills (and get a proper mouse pad !), because the icon-controlled command system can prove quite tricky when used in a situation requiring rapid response.

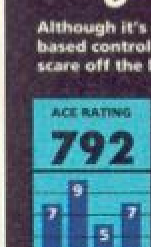
Hill Street Blues' near life-like realism (including day and night cycles) and complex variety of game tasks are impressive but they increase the ever-so-high difficulty level. Apart from tracing criminals and giving evidence in the Court, you will also be expected to maintain a high level of



Although it's quite easy to get the hang of the icon-based control system, the high difficulty setting may scare off the less-persistent gamer.

ACE RATING

792

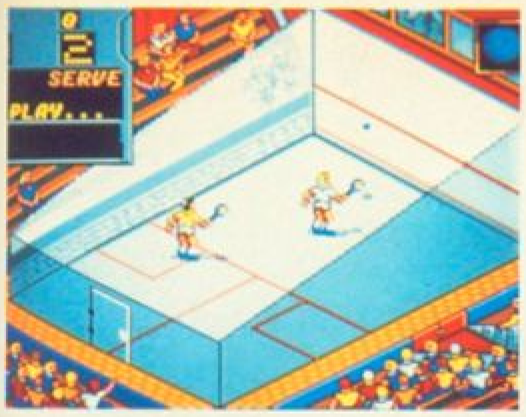


AMIGA

Graphics are fine, but not outstanding (though the digitised pictures are well done). There's a nice title tune and in-game sound effects, but nothing that really stretches the Amiga's sound chip. Those willing to put in a large amount of effort will reap great satisfaction from this interesting approach to a licensed game.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£24.99	OUT NOW



Squash allows you to play any combination of competitors imaginable: computer vs computer, computer vs human, human vs human. The computer opponents range from in ability from pathetic to world class, providing a challenge whatever your playing quality.

JAHANGIR KHAN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SQUASH

Are KRISALIS 'court'-ing disaster with their latest sports sim?

It has to be said that *Jahangir Khan's World Championship Squash* resembles a game released a couple of years ago. But you should never judge a game on looks alone. Although the graphics may seem a little dated compared to other current releases, they don't affect the gameplay or have any bad influence on the general feel. Rest assured that *Squash* will test your reflexes and joystick skills to their utmost limits.

The game allows you to choose between two independent competition systems: a Club Tournament played according to the league rules and a knockout World Championship. A variety of options, including ball type, service rules, competition characteristics and the ever-so-useful practice mode, can be selected from the icon-controlled menu system which may be displayed in five European languages (another step towards 1992?). There's also an option to select and watch matches played between the computer opponents; it's supposedly designed for you to build up a picture of their individual styles and skills, but it's no real help and very dull.

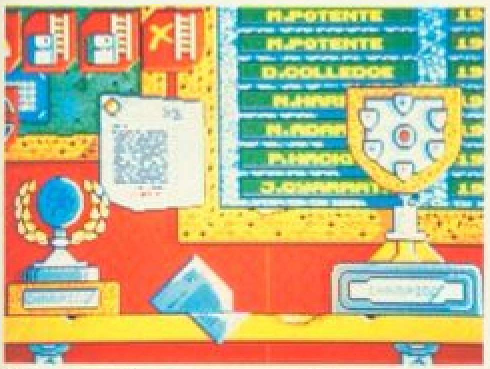
Like the real thing, *Squash* is quite difficult to get into, but once mastered it can prove extremely addictive. Your player can be moved around the court with joystick. Tapping fire and pushing the joystick when near the ball will play a lob or power shot to the left, right or straight-ahead. There's an option to let the computer take shots for you so that you can concentrate on getting your positioning right - very useful!

The general feel is quite good with a very realistic ball animation and not-so-realistic player control which gives an impression of slightly random movement. The unusual isometric-3D view of the squash court makes it difficult to correctly position your player to hit the ball, but after a few practice matches you should be able not only to effectively control the character, but also to produce some brilliant shots which will make your opponent run away in fear.

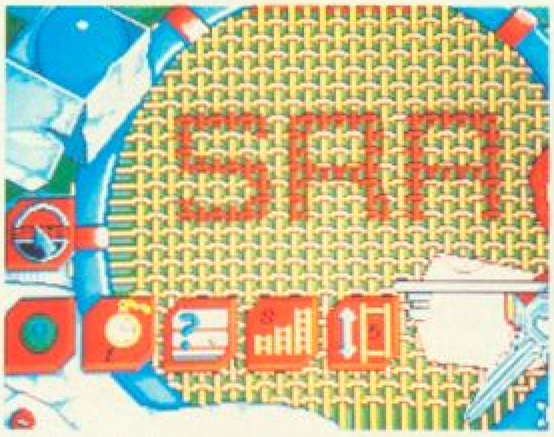
Sound-wise the game is above average. It incorporates realistic sound effects and some jolly tunes which could make you tap your fingers and maybe sometimes stomp your feet (and that's 'maybe').

In all, *Jahangir Khan's World Championship Squash* is a good sports simulation which unfortunately lacks the graphic quality of today's top games, but should bring the patient many hours of enjoyment. Don't be put off by the initial chaos: remember - practice makes perfect!

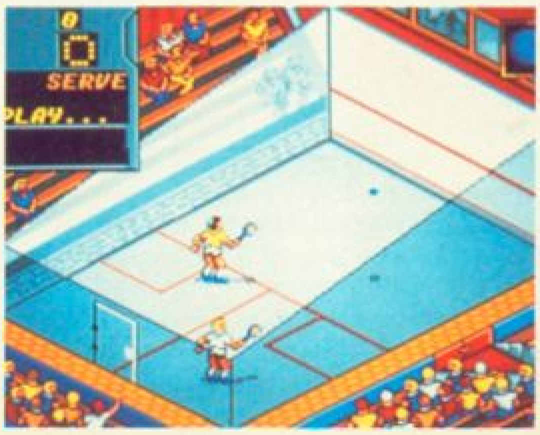
● Tom Troscianka-Carroll

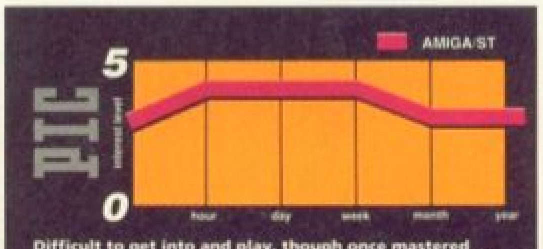


The cup room, where you can save or load your current league position by clicking on the relevant icons.



The attractively-drawn main menu screen. From here you can view the league ladders and the names and statistics of all the participating competitors.





Difficult to get into and play, though once mastered you'll find that *Squash*'s wide range of variously-skilled opponents and two-player options offer an addictive long-lasting challenge.

ACE RATING
725

G	IQ	A	FF
6	3	6	5

AMIGA

The isometric view of the court is nicely done, although it does make play confusing and more than a little frustrating at first. The sampled sound effects of the crowd clapping and the ball thumping against the court walls are excellent.

Kick Off 2 for squash fans this ain't, but it's a rewarding and enjoyable game none-the-less.

ACE RATING
725

G	IQ	A	FF
6	2	6	5

ATARI ST

The ST version is identical to the Amiga in graphics, sound - and difficulty! The high-quality samples are deserving of special mention - no crackle or hiss here.

Squash should provide good fun for any sport freaks: with the large number of skills needing mastering and two different competition systems to be won, it provides a tough, enduring challenge.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.53	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.53	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£25.53	OUT NOW

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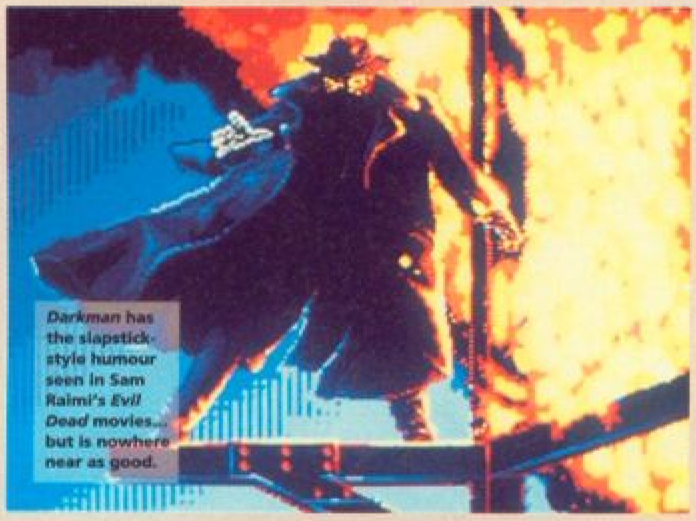
popularity among the public. Frequent gun battles, corpses littering the pavements, excessive use of car sirens, traffic congestion caused by road blocks and above all a high crime rate will cost you popularity and possibly your job. However, if all crimes are quickly solved and the guilty are successfully sentenced in Court your popularity will rise and you may be rewarded with a promotion.

Graphically the game is above average with an well-designed game screen, meaningful icons and several nice touches, including digitised pictures. The birds-eye view of the area serves its purpose quite well, although the multidirectional scrolling is far from perfect. The game doesn't make a full use of the computer's sound capabilities, however the pleasant title tune makes the intro a pleasure to watch.

On the whole, *Hill Street Blues* is an entertaining game, but the high difficulty level means it won't appeal to everyone. Strategy fans will find the game challenging and rewarding to play, but more casual gamers may find them-selves frustrated by the large number of balls which need to be kept simultaneously in the air.

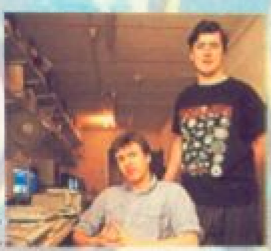
● Tom Troscianka-Carroll

LICENCE

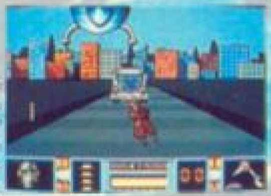


Darkman has the slapstick-style humour seen in Sam Raimi's *Evil Dead* movies... but is nowhere near as good.

Rik Haynes lifts the lid off Ocean's game-of-the-movie construction kit ethic...



Mick West and James Clarke, programmers of *Darkman*.



Perfecting the sprite expansion routines in this 3D section of *Darkman* has been quite difficult for the programmer Mick West.

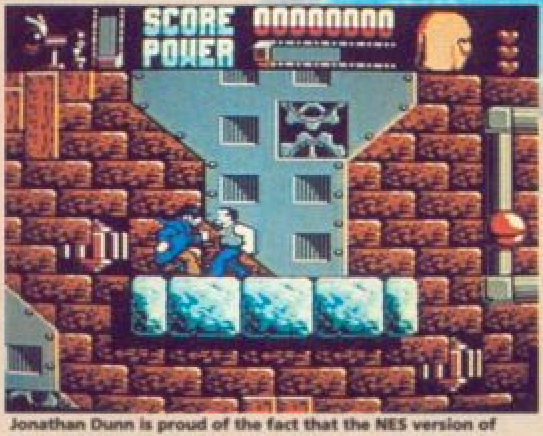
DARKMAN

This spoof comic-style thriller from Writer/Director Sam Raimi doesn't quite live up to his previous *Evil Dead* movies. Although there is an occasional glimpse of the Raimi slapstick genius in *Darkman*, the film was a flop at the box office. Still, this fact doesn't seem to bother Ocean. *Darkman* is now out on video (cert 15) from CIC. Ocean expects it to be a bit of a cult on the small-screen – and possibly on computer and console as well.

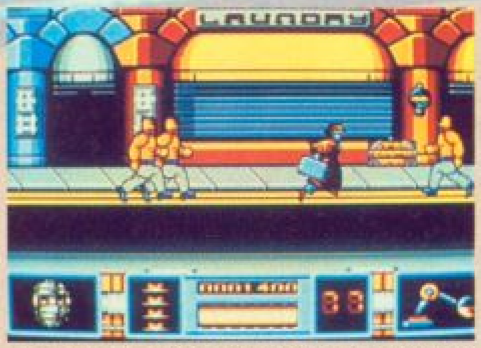
Raimi describes *Darkman* as a "high-tech, action-packed *Phantom of the Opera*". The idea of the game, naturally enough, is to play through the events of the film.

Doctor Peyton Westlake, played by towering Irish actor Liam Neeson in the movie, is a brilliant scientist working on a new synthetic skin ideal for burns sufferers. Taking old photographs of burns victims, he's able to mould a mask using a computer to recreate their faces. Unfortunately, the skin is photosensitive and cannot last longer than 99 minutes in light. An evil gang lead by Durant then breaks into Westlake's lab looking for an important document. They kill his assistant and, attempting to leave no witness, they blow up the lab and Westlake with it. Horribly burnt, he receives surgical treatment making him unable to feel any pain. The side effects include violent mood swings – adrenalin flows through his body unchecked giving him great strength. Westlake escapes from the hospital, becomes the Darkman, and seeks his revenge.

With some design input from Ocean Software Director Gary Bracey, the Amiga and ST versions of *Darkman* have been handled by Mick West (programmer) and James Clarke (graphic artist). West previously wrote the 16-bit versions of *Rotox* (US Gold), *Steve Davies Snooker* (CDS) and *UN Squadron* (US Gold) – while Clarke has provided the visuals in *Strider*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *World Cup '90* and *UN Squadron* for US Gold. Jonathan Dunn, Ocean's resident artist of the audio, is composing the music and sound FX.



Jonathan Dunn is proud of the fact that the NES version of *Darkman* (shown here) also includes sampled sound. Something you don't hear very often on this under-powered deck.



Incorporated into *Darkman* is a *Double Dragon* section. Fans of the genre will be pleased.

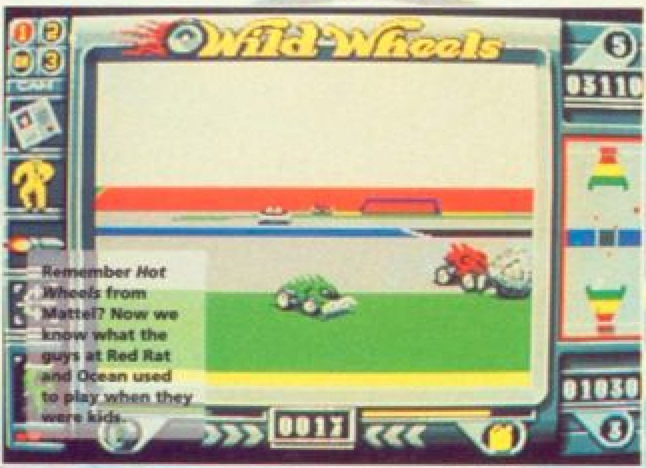
Darkman is in the familiar Ocean movie-licensed mould. A little bit of beat'em-up coupled with the ubiquitous platform section and a 3D section for added spice. "The basic idea of the game was to replicate the action of the film as closely as possible," offers West.

Players take the role of Westlake, alias the Darkman, and begin snapping photographs of Durant's henchmen as they briefly appear at a series of windows. So we're talking Ocean 'Shooting Gallery' yet again. If some good pics are taken, they'll have enough data to make a mask and disguise themselves. This translates into a few hassle-free seconds on the next stage, which bares an uncanny resemblance to the *Double Dragon* martial arts arcade game. Players then enter, surprise, a warehouse. "This is the standard platform section that you get in all Ocean movie conversions," West confirms.

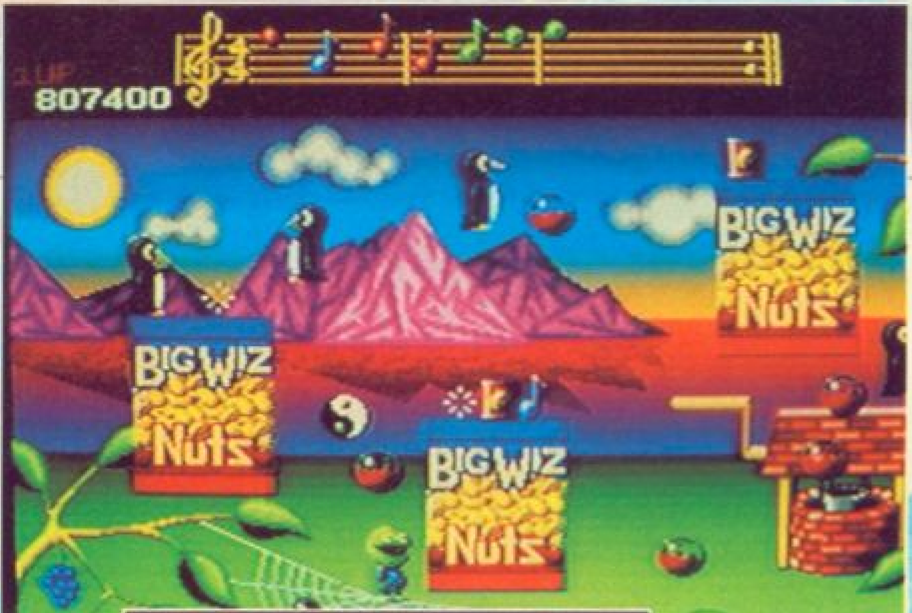
After these platform perils, the player runs and jumps across rooftops while being chased by a helicopter. "This is quite a nice little level," according to West. He says this section is a little bit like *Super Mario Bros*. Although the style is similar, the smoothness is a bit lacking. This is followed by the '3D bit' where *Darkman* grabs onto a rope hanging from the helicopter. Players have to dodge traffic on the road and avoid being shot. Finally, players are thrown into a showdown with the big boss at the top of a building. Didn't we see this in *Robocop 2*?

West and Clarke developed *Darkman* over the course of five months on the PC-based PDS development system. They used the script and stills from the film as a source of reference. Interestingly, Ocean couldn't actually use the faces of the actors in the game. The sprite expansion part in the 3D section has caused the most headaches as far as coding is concerned.

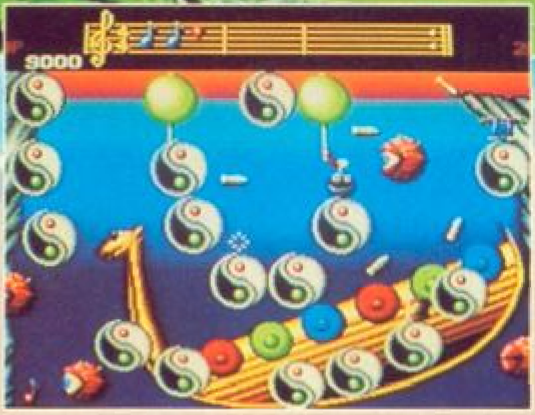
REVOKED?



Remember *Hot Wheels* from Mattel? Now we know what the guys at Red Rat and Ocean used to play when they were kids.



(above) Collect some musical notes in the correct order and you'll get a rendition of a 'classic' tune in *Wizkid.*



(left) Keep an eye out for the special Wizkid exploding heads.

WILD WHEELS

Wild Wheels is a weird version of football, will it be wonderful with it?

Well, here is an odd idea for a game – and a blast from the past. The idea? A football game where the players are cars. The past? Red Rat Software.

This Manchester-based developer started out in 1985 producing games for the old Atari 8-bit computer. The first Red Rat title was, in fact, an art package called *Technicolour Dream.* Eventually, Red Rat produced about 25 games for this veteran computer before turning its attention to more mainstream micros. The Rat-pack had more success with the Amiga and ST versions of *Lombard RAC Rally* (Mandarin) and *International Soccer Challenge* (Microprose).

The concept behind *Wild Wheels* dates back to some old news-reel footage of maniacal American GIs playing football with jeeps. In the game, players control teams of five cars in a race to bounce the ball into the opponents goal. These automobiles are a futuristic cross between stock-cars and those pursuit vehicles driven in the *Mad Max* movies. "We've come up with some fantasy vehicles if you like," says a spokesman for Red Rat. "They've got elements of science-fiction."

The first car players drive is a fairly simple combustion-engined vehicle called the Shrimp. As competitions are won they can upgrade to bigger, better and faster vehicles. They'll even end-up driving monster cars which can shoot or eat lesser opponents.

Wild Wheels, a strange soccer-inspired game, is played over a head-on 3D view of the pitch with players able to rotate their cars in the desired direction. Owners of tracked-vehicles have the advantage of being able to perform very tight turns. "They can practically spin on a six-pence," the spokesman says. Of course, all these cars aren't a million miles away from those tiny toys made by Mattel. Red Rat is now hoping to do *Wild Wheels 2* where players can buy extra bits and bobs for their cars.

WIZKID

The games development talents of Chris Yates and Jon Hare, better known as Sensible Software, will soon be on display again in the sequel to what many believe was their best ever effort. *Wizball* was a surreal shoot'em-up with rain drops and a great two-player team-up option. So what are the duo planning for *Wizkid*, so-called son of *Wizball*?

A "block'em-up" seems to be their answer, a sort of cross between *Arkanoid* and an all-action blaster with a bit of a flight-sim and paint-package thrown in for good measure. In other words, another crazy odd-ball release. Just the sort of thing Ocean needs in the face of yet another *Robocop* game and the appalling *Darkman*. Take a look at these screenshots for confirmation of this not-so Sensible Software. The full ACE review will appear next month.

From the makers of *Wizball, Microprose Soccer* and the *Shoot-'Em-Up Construction kit* comes *Wizkid.*

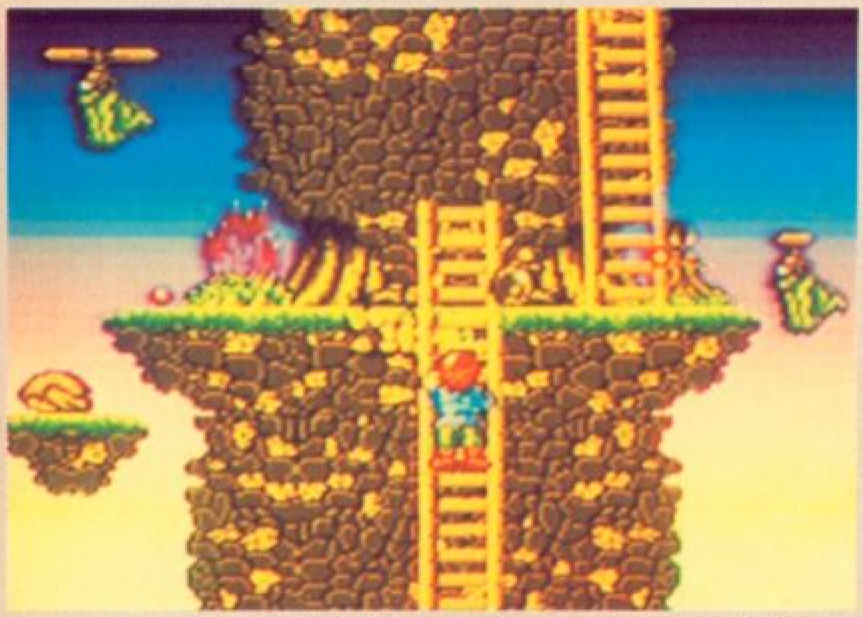
Does West think he's a good programmer? "I write efficient code which doesn't crash. I wouldn't say my games designing skill is up there though." West reckons his greatest achievement has been a Mono Emulator PD utility for the Atari ST. And did he like the *Darkman* film? "It's a low budget movie and it shows. Some of the acting is a bit dodgy. It's a fun movie. It'll do well on video."

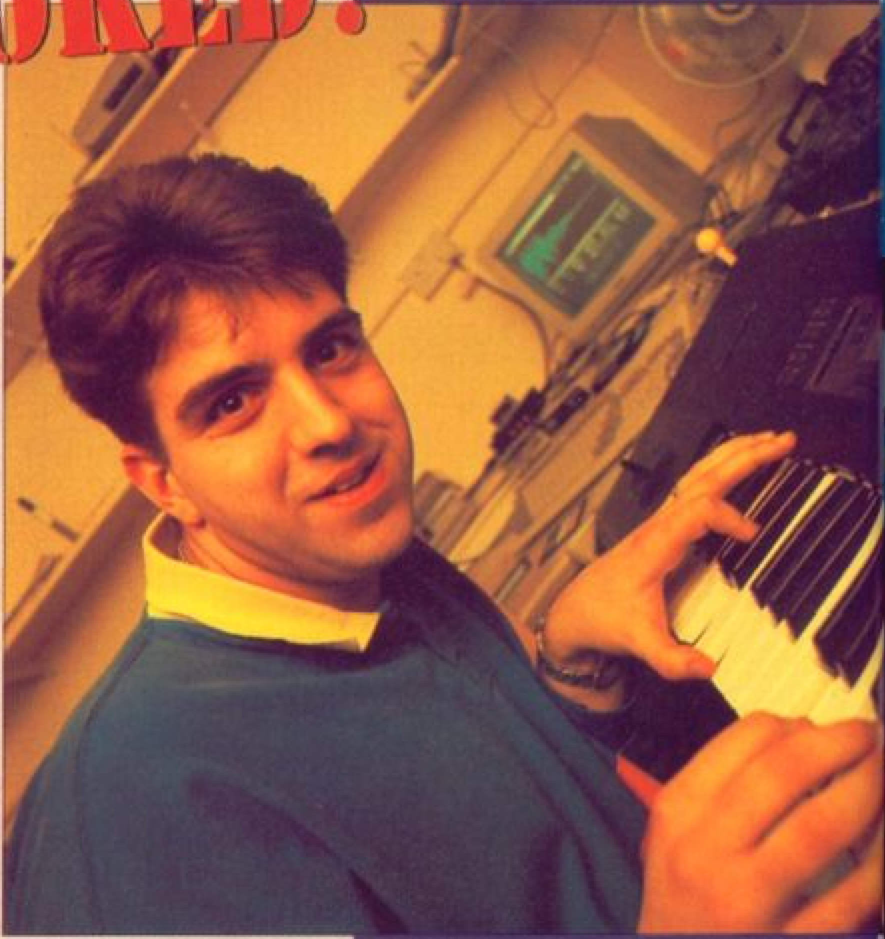
Take any Ocean movie licensed game of the past three years and it won't be hard to make striking comparisons between them. The defacto warehouse/platform scene, shooting gallery and beat'em-up section are all starting to wear a little bit thin. Perhaps Ocean should spend more time on development? Batman on the Amiga, for instance, was written in less than eight weeks. In many ways we encourage Ocean's lack-lustre attempts at more sophisticated software. After all, the Manchester powerhouse has been voted Software House of the Year more times than I can remember. Lack of originality doesn't really matter when you're assured a top five hit in the charts – or does it? Consumers want to try something new occasionally. Ocean are certainly not the only offenders, but as arguably the top softco in the country, they have a responsibility to lead by example, and break this slightly over-familiar mould.

ACE PREPLAY

👍	👎
• Three-games-in-one offer value for money.	• Unoriginal gameplay – we've seen this all before from Ocean. • Graphics, while still in tweaking stages, aren't looking too hot.

LICENCE REVOKED?


As an Elf you must jump, duck and shoot your way through trouble.



ELF

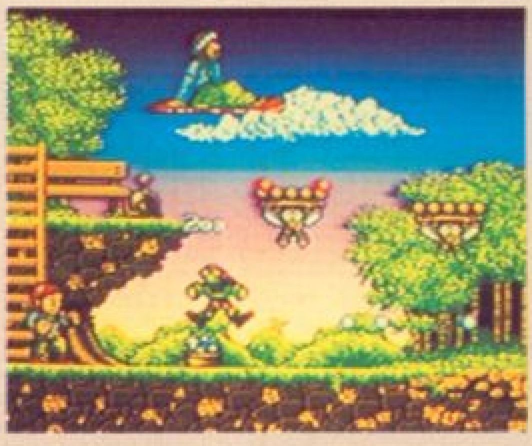
"The ideas for *Elf* just sort of came together," says Paul Oglesby of Nirvana Systems, "It's quite hard to say how the game actually developed. We just thought of the Elf character and the rest filled around that."

Oglesby is in charge of the graphics and Damian Slee, his mate from University, is programming *Elf*. This is the first computer game they've worked on and, amazingly, Slee's first attempt at machine code programming. Even considering these potential stumbling blocks, the team think they've spent far too long on the project. They began the *Elf* back in February last year. "We weren't really influenced by any other games, though we did used to play a lot of platform games on the BBC micro."

A lively arcade adventure, *Elf* is split into six levels. Each of these span over 100 screens and is filled with different backdrops and creatures. First comes the Forest with trees and hills in the background. Next you're outside the ruins of an old castle complete with crumbling walkways and underground passages. Here men-at-arms give you grief with spears, shields, cannon and flamethrowers. Progress across the lake using stilts and a series of platforms while dodging flying fish and a few other things. Run away from swamp people and slime beasts. Venture into the caves filled with dwarves mining precious crystals. Don't forget you've got to rescue your girlfriend from the evil gang.

Elf is very puzzle-orientated, although there's a lot of shooting and jumping involved. These puzzles stem from Oglesby and Slee sitting down together and hatching silly ideas. Characters in *Elf* are all intended to be humorous. The things they want are silly, like the old lady who is after a pair of false-teeth. "The whole thing joins together as one big joke," confides Oglesby. You must interact with and talk to these crazy creatures. Along the way you bump into a series of shops where you can swap the junk collected on your travels for more useful spells.

The gorgeous graphics seen in the game would sit very comfortably on a Japanese console. Does Oglesby think *Elf* will appear on the Megadrive? "That's up to Ocean," he confirms. The boys next project will probably be a space game, they're not saying too much about it at this stage.


Cornelius the Elf in on a quest to save his girlfriend from an evil gang.

OH, MISTER SONGWRITER

Jonathan Dunn has been creating computer game music and sound-effects for the past five years. This 22-year-old effectively took over from Martin Galway as Ocean's main musician. As a teenager he tinkered with his C64 in the dead silence of night, just like most boys do at that age. Dunn has worked on 30-40 games over a multitude of formats – from Spectrum and Amiga, PC to Gameboy. He recently added consoles to the extensive list of machines supported. Dunn is looking forward to getting his first assignment on the Nintendo Super Famicom which he thinks has got the best audio spec of any machine on the market thanks to eight-channel sound and built-in echo effects. "Creating good quality audio on the ST is a real bitch," says Dunn. "It would be nice if more Roland sound modules were used by ST gameplayers. I just use samples on the Amiga."

These Amiga sounds are created using the *Futuresound* sampler hardware and *Audio Master II* editing software. Dunn has developed his own music and sound-effect routines for each computer and console. It can take anything from two hours to two weeks to produce a single tune. Sometimes he hits the Korg keyboard to work out a tune but finds it hard to pinpoint his musical influences. "I'll listen to anything really, from Depeche Mode to Def Leppard." Even so, Dunn seems to have an affection for soul-funk and is currently kicking around a few ideas with a friend after work. "I'm not into the Manchester-scene of Happy Mondays and Stone Roses. I keep away from all that." This is a great shame, it would have been nice to have an indie-dance track on the next Ocean game.

It comes as kind of a shock that Dunn dislikes doing the sound FX in games, surely this is the most important aspect of his job. "It's hard synthesising the effects when you can't sample them. You've heard these effects 20 times before. I normally use sound FX records and tapes."

Every so often Dunn leaves the sanctuary of his music studio to do wacky things, like the time he ran off with his girlfriend to get married in Las Vegas.

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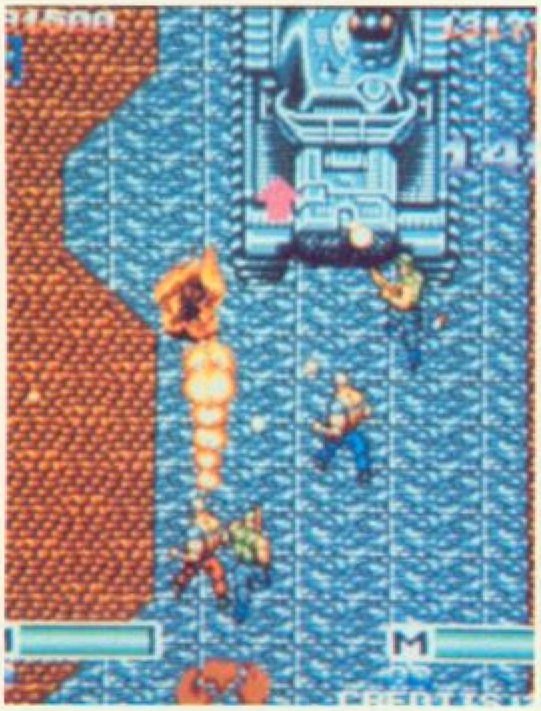
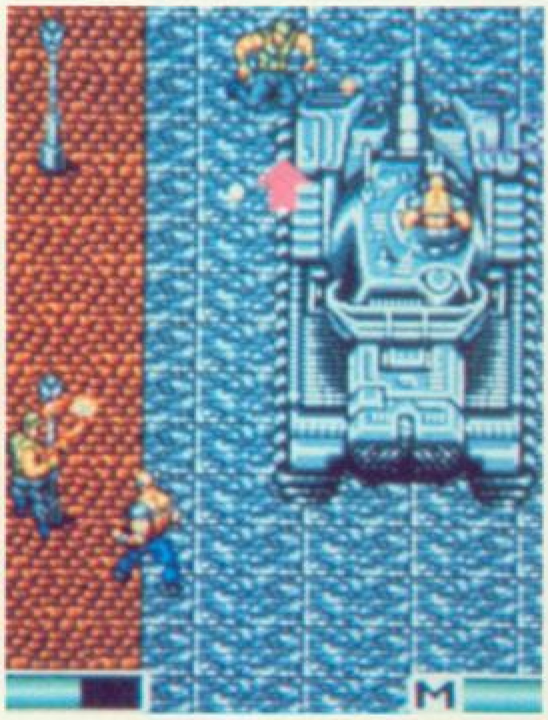
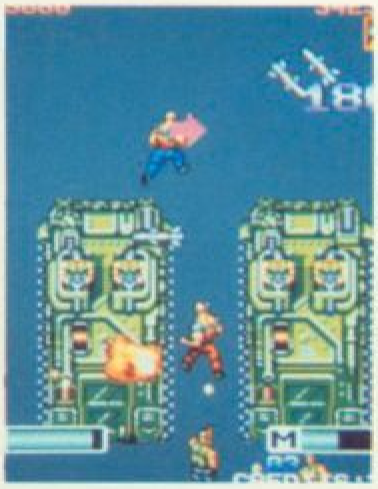






(Far Left)
Now you're cooking! The flame thrower turns the enemy into flame-grilled corpses. But hang on, there's an empty tank...
(Left)
Avoid the roaring jets of flames from this super amoured car - one touch spells instant death!

(Middle Above)
...With one player driving, crushing all opposition, and the other mopping up stragglers, it's easy to make progress. What a pity the tank only works for a limited time.

MERCS

US Gold have had a long line of successes with their CapCom arcade machine conversions, including *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts*, *Strider* and *Black Tiger*, and *Mercs* looks set to be the finest conversion yet.

The former President of the United States, while on a peace mission in central Africa, has been kidnapped by Zutula rebels. Due to the possible diplomatic repercussions, the US Government can't mount a rescue mission with its own troops, and is forced to hire an elite band of mercenaries to do its dirty work. Okay, so the story's not going to win the Booker Prize, but as an excuse for a non-stop frenzy of violence it works perfectly.

The rescue mission is split into eight stages, each entailing a nightmare trek through crowds of heavily-armed rebels, past lumbering tanks and around machine-gun nests to a face-off with a giant end-of-level piece of hardware. Along the way extra weapons, power-ups and energy refills can be collected by shooting open packing crates found along the way.

Congratulations are due to Tiertex, who have done an excellent job of reproducing the pace and excitement of the arcade coin-op on the ever-so-'umble Amiga. *Mercs*, due soon, should easily satisfy the blood-lust of even the most violent shoot-'em-up fan.

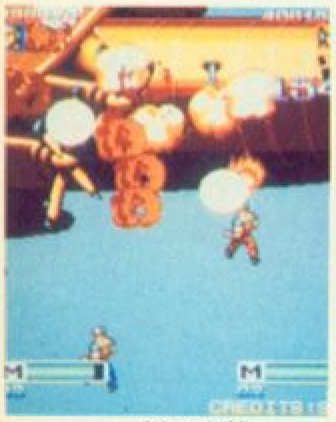
● **David Upchurch**

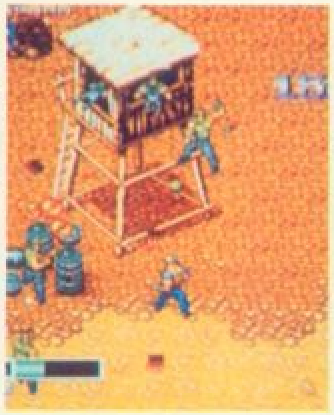
ACE PREPLAY

👍	👎
● Fast multi-directional scrolling shoot-'em-up action with several novel gameplay twists. ● Lots of great weapons, especially the flame thrower. ● Highly detailed and varied scenery, some of which can be destroyed. ● Ability to commandeer jeeps and tanks adds to the fun. ● Excellent simultaneous two-player option.	● Narrow gameplay area. ● Very tough to complete. ● End-of-level baddies take a ridiculously large number of shots to kill.

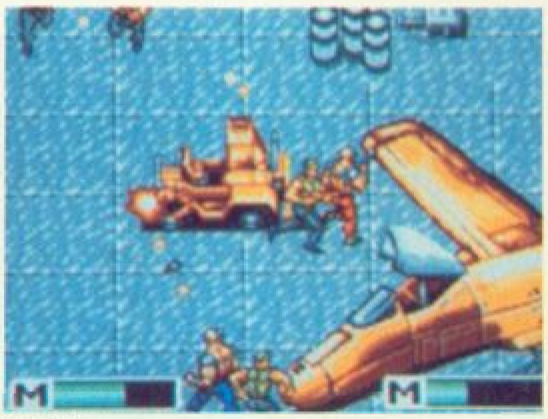
Release Details

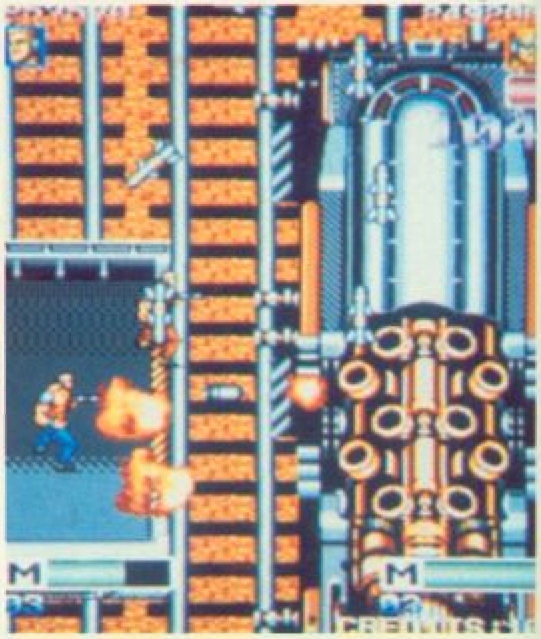
AMIGA	£25.99	June
ATARI ST	£25.99	June



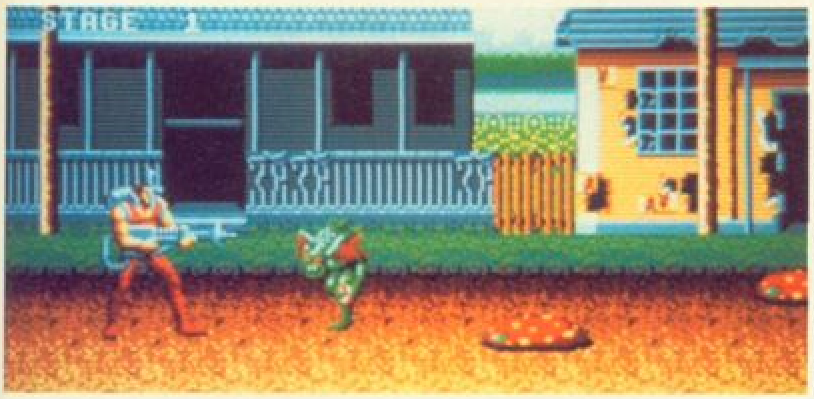


(Above Left)
The final level - and what a challenge! The rebels are flying the ex-Pres out of the warzone in this Hercules transport. You've got to run alongside the taxiing 'plane, avoiding enemy fire while pumping the fuselage full of lead.
(Above Centre)
One of *Mercs* more-appealing features is the way you can blast away great chunks of the landscape. Pump a few shots into this watch tower and watch it spectacularly explode, leaving behind the charred stumps of the support!





(Above)
The multi-directionally scrolling backdrops are very impressive. Full of colour, detail and variety, they're a joy to behold. What a shame you've got to blow it all up!
(Right)
***Mercs* has some neat variations on the basic formula. On this stage you're placed on a railway truck that slowly rolls up-screen, taking you past a giant loco. As you slowly trundle past, you've got to blast away the lethal shell- and rocket-lobbing emplacements.**



(Left)
"Greetings, alien visitors, and welcome to Earth," hails the human (who's still carrying a gun just in case). "Blurgle off, Terran!" retorts the little green monster.

(Below)
"Take that, you foul-mouthed little zeeb!" cries the brave defender of freedom, letting rip with a blast from his gun.

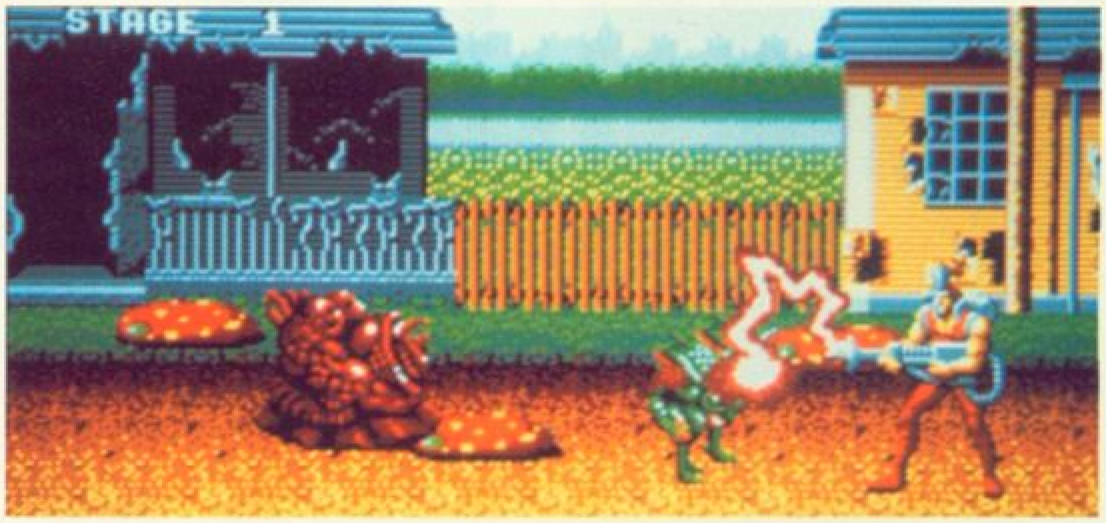
ALIEN STORM

Due for a September release is *Alien Storm*, which is being converted from the Sega coin-op by Tiertex. Set in the near future, the Earth has been invaded by hideous aliens. Taking on the role of either a hunky man, amazonian woman or a Terminator-like 'droid, the player has to make his or her way through legions of aliens to a final confrontation with the Alien Brain aboard its huge mothership.

***Alien Storm* constantly keeps you on your toes by chopping and changing between three distinct gameplay styles as you progress through its many levels. You'll get to play a horizontal walk-and-shoot-'em-up (a little like *Golden Axe* with aliens and short-range weapons); an *Operation Wolf* style shoot-out between you and wave after wave of leaping, screaming weirdos; and a rapidly-scrolling run through an obstacle course of walls, holes and yet more monsters.**

These exclusive Amiga screenshots show the sort of antics you can expect on the first level. While it's very early days yet, Tiertex seem to be doing an excellent job. The aliens are fast-moving, well-animated and very ugly, and the scrolling backgrounds look great. If Tiertex do as good a job on *Alien Storm* as they've done on *Mercs*, then we're in for a treat.

● David Upchurch



JETFIGHTER II

Having read the mission briefing and checked out the enemy positions on the map, tapping RETURN will take you on a vertiginous flight down to where your 'plane is waiting and straight into the cockpit.

Hot from the States, and just before the ACE deadline, comes *Jetfighter II: Advanced Tactical Fighter*. When released in America the US games magazine went wild, with PC Magazine hailing it as "the best flight simulator on a desktop computer, period!"

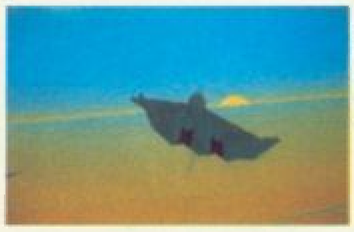
Anyone who has played *F/A-18 Interceptor* (still one of the best Amiga flight sims after all these years) will get a definite feeling of deja vu when they take *Jetfighter II* for a spin. The control system is almost identical, prior to take-off there's the same exhilirating aerial camera zoom-in on the cockpit and the 'planes have the same resilience to stalling that bad pilots love! This, on glancing at the game credits, is not surprising because the designer of both sims is Bob Dinnerman, who also wrote the Bally coin-op *Discs of Tron* (remember that?).

On booting up the first thing that impresses . bout *Jetfighter II* is the sheer number of missions - there's well over 100 to tackle (there's even one called MIssion Saddam!), all with the accent on fast action. There are several jets to try out, including the F/A-18 Hornet, F-16 Falcon, F-14 Tomcat and even the new F-23 Advanced Tactical Fighter, and each can be loaded up with a huge range of the latest combat weaponry (some of which is still Top Secret).

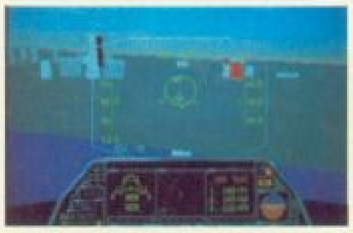
In flight the 'planes are pretty easy to handle, and forgiving of pilot error, though combat certainly isn't - the enemy pilot's are cunning and vicious. The 3D is stunningly beautiful: even on an under-powered 8MHz PC the speed and fluidity of the detailed images is very impressive. The 'plane can be viewed out-of-cockpit from any angle, with the camera smoothly panning between the various viewing angles..

Due to the proximity of the deadline, I haven't spent enough time on the game to give it a true Preplay, but my initial impressions are that those highly-praising US gamers may well be right. The full review will appear next month.

● David Upchurch



Jetfighter II features some beautifully-rendered 3D. Here's your Tomcat heading off into the sunset - gorgeous!



Just like *F/A-18*, the game world's centred around the San Francisco bay area, so you can relive those happy memories of buzzing the Golden Gate Bridge.

Release Details

AMIGA	TBA	TBA
IBM PC	£35.99	June

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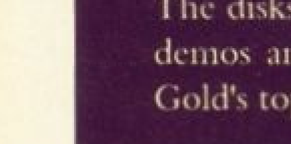
E. Motion the game was programmed by the Assembly Line team and won every top magazine rating going on its release last year. **The One** itself commented: "A work of genius" and awarded it 92%.Other mags were less stinting in their praise.



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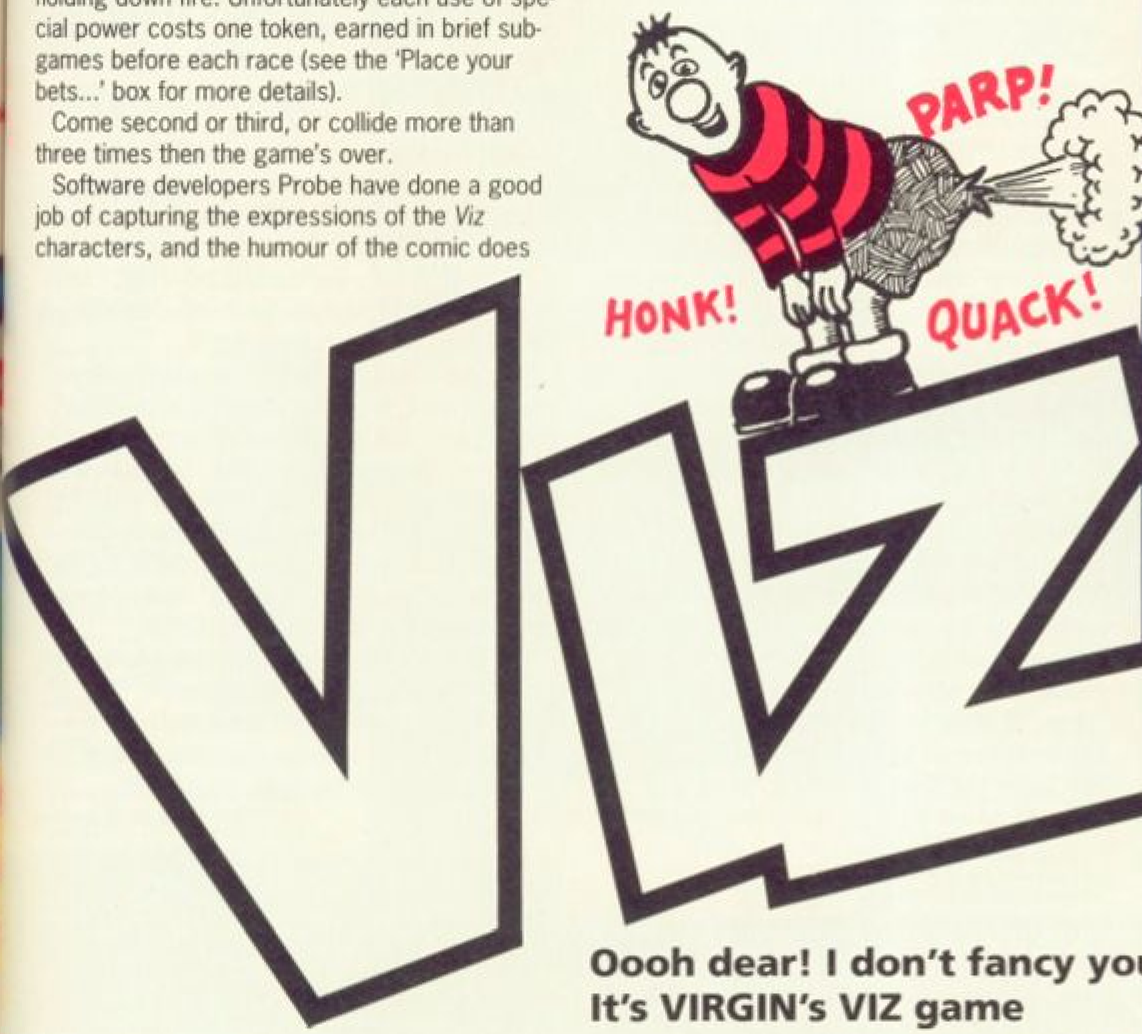

PARP!
HONK!
QUACK!
VIZ

Oooh dear! I don't fancy yours much. It's VIRGIN's VIZ game

How do you convert a top-selling 'adult' (I use the term loosely) comic into a computer game? Particularly one featuring bizarre characters such as Finbarr Saunders (and his double entendres), Sid the Sexist, Mrs Brady the Old Lady, Aldridge Prior (the hopeless liar) and Rodney Rix (he throws bricks)?

Simple. You turn it into a five-level race between Johnny Fartpants (with his amazing flatulence force), Buster Gonad (who has unfeasibly large testicles) and Biffa Bacon (the pathologically violent Geordie).

The player selects one of the characters to control, who must then be guided through five horizontally-scrolling race courses, set in the Country, Town, Building Site, Beach and Disco. Each course is packed with obstacles and manic non-participating *Viz* characters to avoid. Any collisions cost your dazed character valuable seconds.

Each character has special powers which can be called into play during the race by tapping or holding down fire. Unfortunately each use of special power costs one token, earned in brief sub-games before each race (see the 'Place your bets...' box for more details).

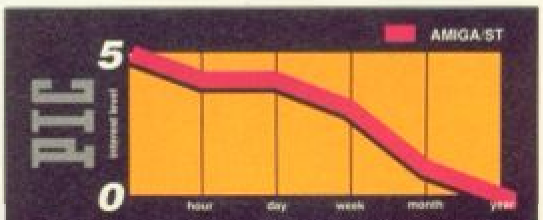
Come second or third, or collide more than three times then the game's over.

Software developers Probe have done a good job of capturing the expressions of the *Viz* characters, and the humour of the comic does come through at times via the speech bubbles from the various characters (though it's amazing how jokes that make you laugh on the printed page often die on the TV screen).

Unfortunately the biggest problem with *Viz* is that, although very playable, it's too simplistic and lacks variety. The six sub-games are all joystick-waggling variants, and it won't be long before you've seen them all and become completely proficient in them. The races themselves are fun for a while, and there's a certain urge to play on to see the new courses and characters, but they're very tough, sometimes frustratingly so. If you're a big fan of the comic then you'll get some fun star spotting, but those looking for a classic game are likely to be disappointed.

Not bad, eh? A complete review of the Viz game and not one double entendre. I wonder if I can **keep it up.**

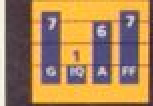
●David Upchurch



The six sub-games, though limited and a bit samey, are good fun for a while, as is the race. But eventually you'll get tired of it, and the game doesn't have enough depth make you persevere.

ACE RATING

695

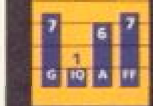


AMIGA

The graphics are fine, being a fair representation of their comic counterparts, and they're well-animated too. The jolly jingles suit the game's nature, but it's a shame that the sound effects are not more bawdily appropriate. Overall, *Viz* is adequate: it's not going to set your world alight but it's fun - though very tough - while it lasts.

ACE RATING

695

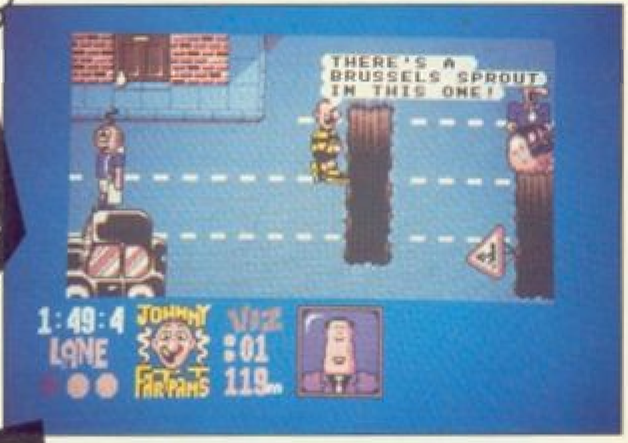


ATARI ST

Graphically identical to the Amiga version, save for two strips down the side of the scrolling game area illustrating various *Viz* stars, and the warbling ST tunes are great. *Viz* is a tough challenge but too shallow to repay endurance.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£19.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£19.99	OUT NOW



HOOSE YOUR PLAYE

PLACE YOUR BETS...

ACE's at-a-glance guide to the three competitors.

JOHNNY FARTPANTS SUB-GAMES

A Using his unique anal talents (and your joystick-waggling skills), Johnny has to inflate as many balloons as possible in a strict time limit. And what do balloons make? Tokens!

B Pump it up! Waggling the joystick causes Johnny to bottom-blast himself into the sky. The higher he gets, the more tokens he wins.

SPECIAL POWERS

- Tapping fire causes Johnny to emit a mini-guff that'll blow him safely over smaller track obstacles.
- Holding down fire for a second then tapping it builds up a Johnny special - the mega-chuff - that'll blast him down the track, shaving valuable seconds off his time.

BUSTER GONAD SUB-GAMES

A Plum pancake time! Against the clock Buster has to flatten as many doughballs as possible with his oversized organs. Again, more joystick waggling is needed.

B Win tokens by waggling the joystick to bounce Buster skywards using his titanic testicles. A painful test of endurance!

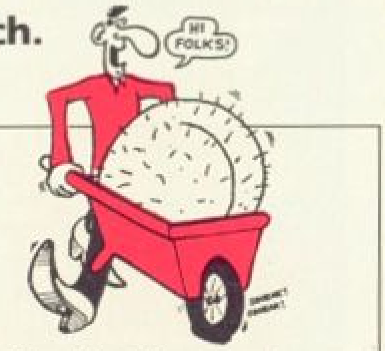
SPECIAL POWERS

- Tapping fire lets Buster mount his pliable plums and bounce over any small obstacles.
- Holding down fire for a second then tapping it whips out Buster's special plum-carrying wheelbarrow, allowing him to make a speedy spurt for the lead.

BIFFA BACON SUB-GAMES

A Waggle the joystick to make Biffa drink against the clock. The more pints Biffa downs, the more tokens he earns.

B Token-bearing bricks rain down on Biffa, who can try to head-butt, punch or kick them away with a well-timed joystick movement.

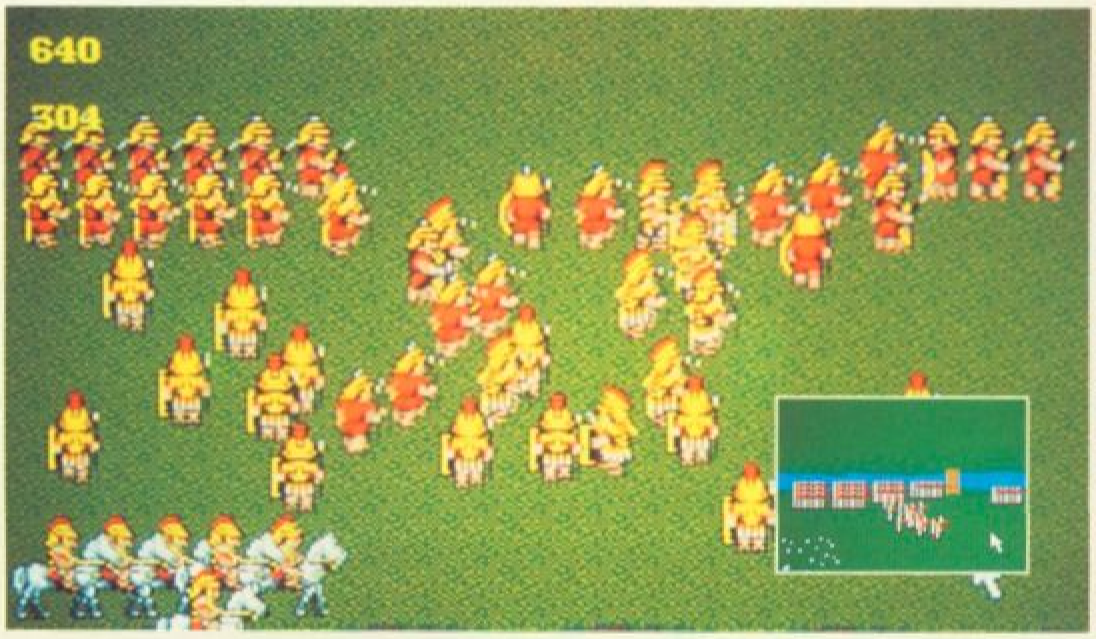


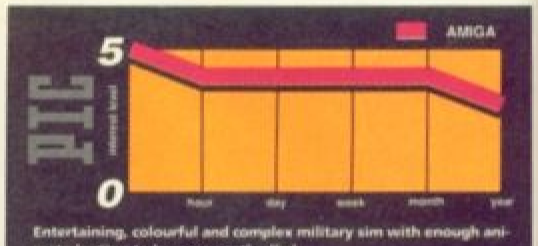
SPECIAL POWERS

- Tapping fire makes Biffa bash anyone or anything unfortunate to get in his way.
- Holding down fire for a second then tapping it convinces Biffa that SOMEONE HAS SPILT HIS PINT, whereupon he goes into an unstoppable fighting frenzy.

COHORT

Strap on your armour and get ready to smash the barbarians in IMPRESSIONS' colourful Roman romp





Entertaining, colourful and complex military sim with enough animated action to keep you enthralled.

ACE RATING

890

G	IQ	A	FF
8	8	7	8

AMIGA

While Cohort has plenty of historical detail, its colourful graphics, entertaining animation, imaginative use of sound and flexible icon control are what really makes it. It makes good use of the Amiga's facilities without descending into gimmickry, and is supplied with enough historical and military background to provide hours of war-mongering fun.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£29.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£29.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£29.99	OUT NOW

It's difficult to combine strategy and tactics with colourful graphics and animation; either historical authenticity or excitement seems to fall by the wayside. In the case of *Cohort*, though, the combination comes off fairly well. History buffs will find enough to satisfy them, while arcade addicts will be able to keep their eyes open for a change.

The success of the Roman civilisation was based on their military prowess as much as the sophistication of their laws and government; in other words, smash the barbarians first then build them an aquaduct. *Cohort* puts you in charge of one of these civilising influences.

Like Impressions' last hit, *Rorke's Drift*, the game has a fairly limited scope but gives you plenty of control over your strategy and tactics; you fight a small battle rather than an extended campaign. Each of the dozen scenarios has a definite objective - take that bridge, hold that hill - but you can also define your own scenarios.

The game is entirely mouse controlled; you control the Blue army, your opponent the Red, with each unmounted figure on the screen representing 100 men and each horseman 50. You can choose one of eight pre-defined armies, or define your own.

There are seven different troop types; light, medium and heavy cavalry, archers, light, medium and heavy infantry. You also have a choice of four terrains; open field, bridge, cliff and hill. An overview display shows the whole of the landscape with troop positions.

The screen display features a number of icons at the bottom, which access different information displays and control options such as game save; the main window showing the battlefield; and control windows which pop up in the middle of the screen.

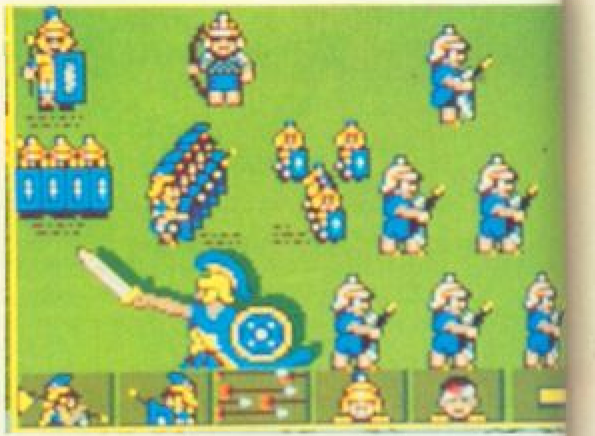
You can issue movement orders to individual figures or groups by clicking on the appropriate icon in the command window; to move a short distance, select a group, return to the main display and place a cross on the point you want to move to. For long moves, use the directional arrows to select the direction of movement. You can then scroll around the battlefield, watching your forces move into battle, and monitor their progress by clicking on the icons for attack strength, defence strength, missile power, morale and numbers in the command window.

A number of different battle formations can be selected, but you don't have the option to go for exotic manoeuvres like the shield-backed Turtle, more's the pity. Once you have selected a target for missiles, firing is automated.

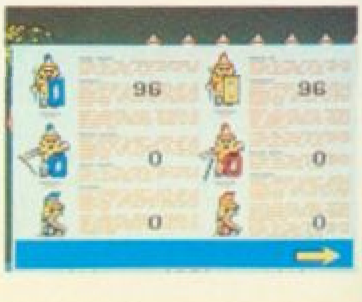
One of the best features of the game is the realistic background soundtrack of thundering hooves, clashing swords and the screams of dying men. When two units clash, combat continues until one retreats, is wiped out, or loses its morale and is routed. A statistics display gives you the totals for alive, dead and routed for each army, and a "Fast-Forward-Battle" mode allows you to move quickly through the battle.

With lack of efficient communication between forces, this form of warfare presents extraordinary challenges. *Cohort* manages to present all these challenges in a colourful, entertaining and fast-moving form. It's a killer!

● **Chris Jenkins**

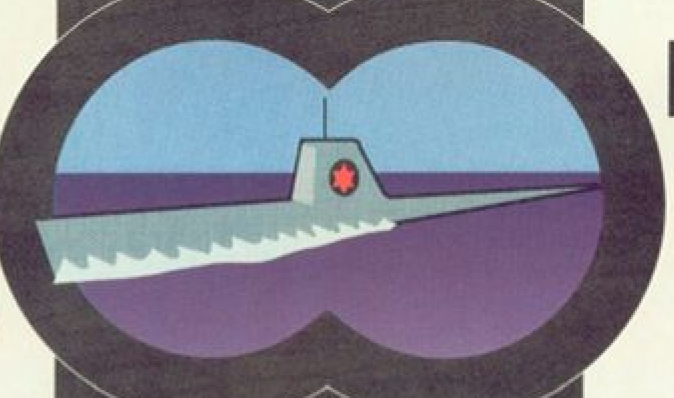


(Above) Using the nifty zoom facility you can easily get *a close-up view of* the troop positions.



Via this menu you can get an instant idea of the relative army strengths.

DAS BOOT



Will MINDSCAPE's U-boat sim give you that sinking feeling?

Deep below the waves the submarine crew wait, not daring to move a muscle for fear of alerting the enemy ships passing high above. One submariner slowly raises his hand to wipe a bead of sweat from his eye, clumsily knocking a spanner to the floor. The metallic clang rings around the vessel like a bell. There's a moment of heart-stopping tension. Has the enemy heard? Seconds pass, then minutes. The enemy ships move on. The crew - for now - are safe.

Tense stuff - anyone who watches those '40s war films BBC 1 always shows on dull Sunday afternoons will know the scene. Can *Das Boot* generate a similar atmosphere of nervy claustrophobia?

Initial impressions are mixed. The manual is interesting and filled with some fascinating facts about U-boats and their crews. The in-game presentation, however, can really only be described as adequate. Although the main menu has an attractive drawing of a U-boat under attack as a backdrop, the rest are very drab, largely being point-and-click lists on a plain grey background.

The number of variables that can be altered is impressively large. The player can choose to control one of three U-boat classes, and define how realistic (and hence tougher) the game is by adjusting how reliable the torpedoes are, how quickly repairs are made and whether equipment developed post-1941 (when the game is set) can be installed.

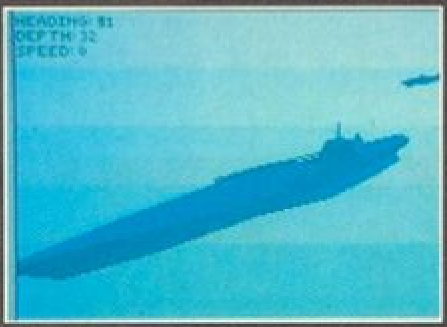
Before beginning the missions proper, there's an option to get in some Baltic training, where you can practice skills such as shooting down enemy 'planes with the deck anti-aircraft gun, navigating through a minefield, avoiding depth charges and torpedoing enemy vessels. This is a nice feature, as it allows the first-time player to get straight into some action.

There are only five missions on offer, each set in exotic locations ranging from the chill Arctic to the warm waters of the Mediterranean. The missions are generally seek-and-destroy based, and their difficulty veers erratically between very easy to very difficult. One mission, which simply involved sailing from one side of the map to the other while shooting down wave after wave of enemy aircraft, was completed on my first go. Another mission involved hunting down three enemy ships; after a long hunt I was blown out of the water within seconds of encountering the first ship.

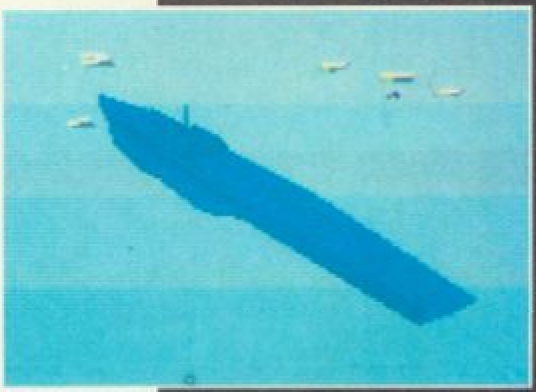
While *Das Boot* is enjoyable enough, what it lacks is any real feeling of tension or atmosphere. Apart from the occasional disembodied status message from your First Officer, there's no indication that anyone's on-board apart from yourself, and any sense of being responsible for the lives and safety of fifty-odd sweaty, grimy bodies trapped in a leaky tin can is sadly lacking.

Though dedicated sim fans may find *Das Boot* lacking in detail and be repelled some of the more 'arcade'-like aspects, as a playable introduction to the world of simulation software it's ideal.

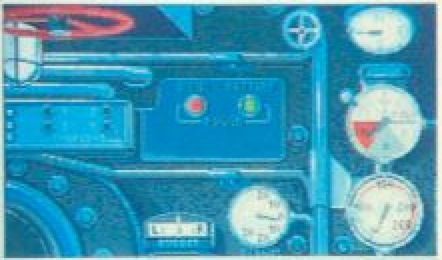
● David Upchurch



Your submarine is under attack from two enemy craft. The subtle palette used for the underwater scenes provides a pleasingly murky-looking environment.



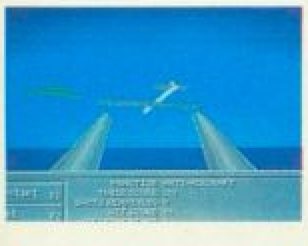
(Right) Negotiating an underwater minefield. The ability to steer while watching the proceedings from an 'out-of-sub' camera makes life much easier. On the game's most realistic setting the external cameras are disabled and you've got to navigate using instruments alone.

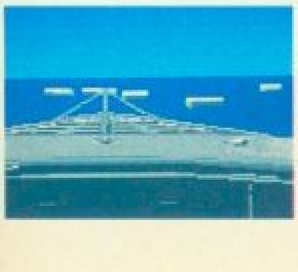


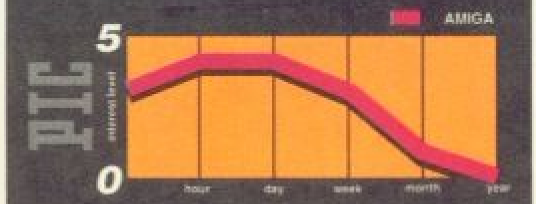
(Above) The submarine's main control room. By clicking on the rows of icons at the base of the screen you can quickly switch between the submarine's various stations. You can send and receive messages (some of which may need to be decoded) in the radio room, load up torpedoes in the (appropriately-named) torpedo room, check on the ship's performance and damage status in the engine room, plot a course in the map room and man the ship's cannon and anti-aircraft gun.

(Below) Manning the anti-aircraft guns - one of *Das Boot*'s more arcade-like aspects. The guns can be rotated, elevated and fired using the mouse. The 3D world has high and low detail settings, with a corresponding change in game speed.

(Bottom) Navigating a surface minefield from the conning tower isn't as easy as it looks. The trick is to slowly edge forward, taking care not to sweep into mines when turning the sub.







Das Boot's presentation is competent but lacks gloss - the appearance of the standard Workbench disc requester when the second disc needs inserting is symptomatic of this. The ability to practice eight of the more exciting submarine activities makes the game instantly accessible, but the limited number of missions (some of which can be completed quite easily) casts doubt on the game's lifespan.

ACE RATING

765

G	IQ	A	FF
6	5	8	6

AMIGA

The 3D is certainly not going to give Realtime or Argonaut sleepless nights, but it's adequate for the job in hand - even if the enemy 'planes do look like balsa wood toy gliders on the 'low detail' setting! The screen also 'glitches' annoyingly at times. The churning engine noise and ack-ack explosions are impressive, and those Amiga's endowed with one megabyte get even more sound effects, the most notable being the realistic whine of passing 'planes.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£30.64	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£30.64	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£30.64	OUT NOW

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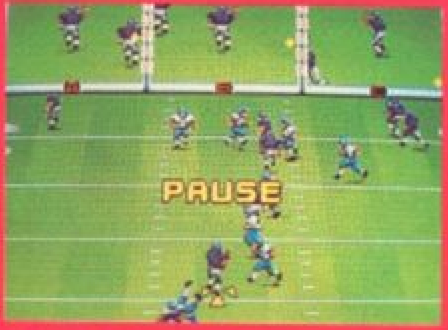

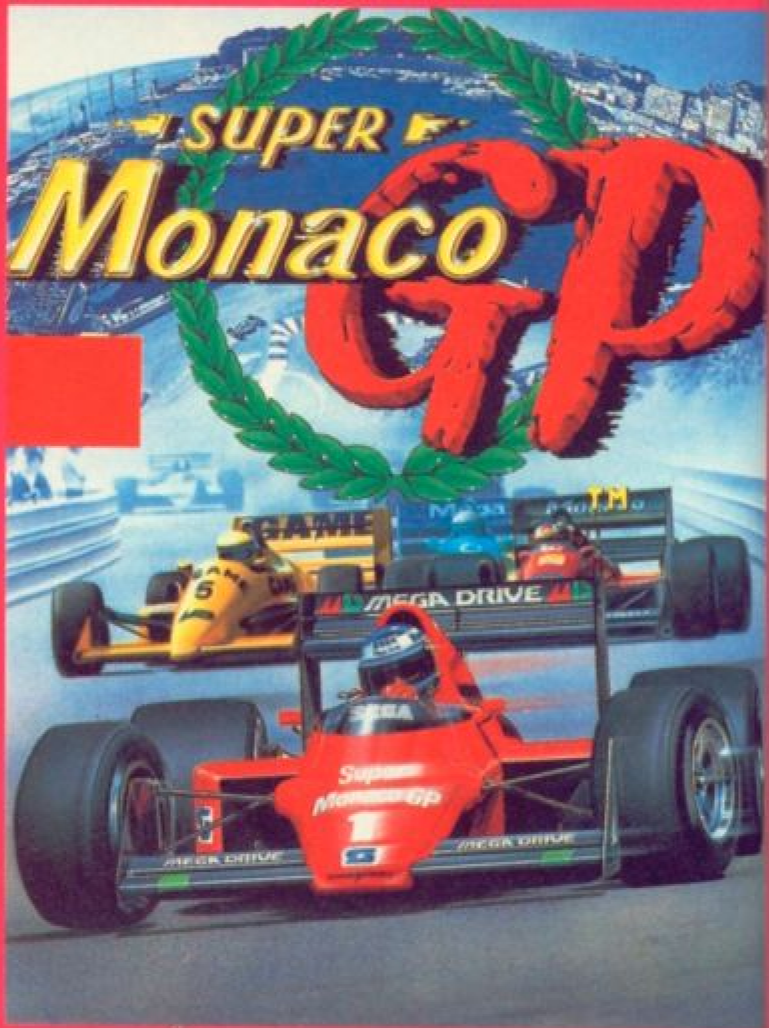
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COMPUTER + VIDEO GAMES

R-TYPE

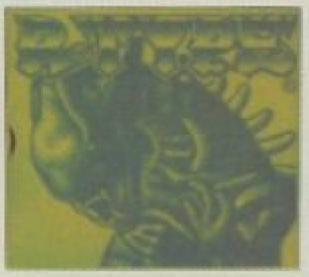
It's here! IREM's ultimate shoot-em-up of all time blasts onto the Gameboy

Eyes around the office go all misty when *R-Type* is mentioned. The nostalgia level associated to this particular alien-death fest is stronger than most. Inevitably, the monochrome Gameboy version has its work cut out if it is to be considered a decent conversion of a game best known for its fantastic colour graphics.

But addicts will be pleased to learn that the mini-screen version of their fave blast is every bit as frenetic, frustrating and fun.

Your aim is to halt the advance of a renegade alien army, which is rampaging through space destroying everything in its path. Many methods have been tried, but the might of the aliens' arsenal has repelled all head-on attacks, not least because the intricate interiors to many of the generation-craft are so complex, a large ship simply can't negotiate its way around inside.

(Right)
All your *R-Type* favourites are faithfully reproduced on this Gameboy mini-marvel - even the Giger-inspired title page graphics.
(Far right)
You'll need to build up the beam weapon to full power to see off this big nasty.



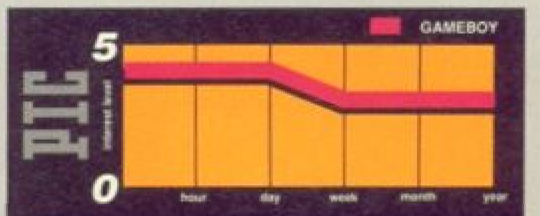
Instead, your mission is to pilot a lone fighter craft through the massed ranks of fighters and freighters, destroying the infrastructure of the enemy forces as you go.

Initially, your ship is equipped with a pulse-laser which can either be rapid-fired by jabbing the fire button or built into a huge ball of anti-matter by holding down and then releasing the button. However, by blasting particular types of alien - easily recognisable after a while - you can collect side-lasers, diagonal lasers, rockets and the most vital power-up of all, a little pod which sits on the front of your ship.

The pod shields you from some forms of harm and is itself impervious to attack. In certain circumstances, when flying up a blind alley or facing an especially well-protected end-of-level monster, it's advantageous to fire off the pod and then guide it deep into the heart of the hostile zone. By making contact with the 'soft' part of the target, the pod inflicts an equivalent amount of damage as a constant laser beam, and also leaves you free to concentrate on the mechanics of flying.

Graphically, *R-Type* is top-notch. It should serve to remind critics of the Gameboy's visual capabilities that it's right up there with the best.

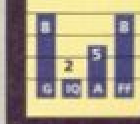
● **Jim Douglas**



Instant grab-factor which lasts right through to the end. The toughness of some aliens and the satisfying gameplay will keep you coming back until you've cracked it and even then you'll return to try and better your score.

ACE RATING

820

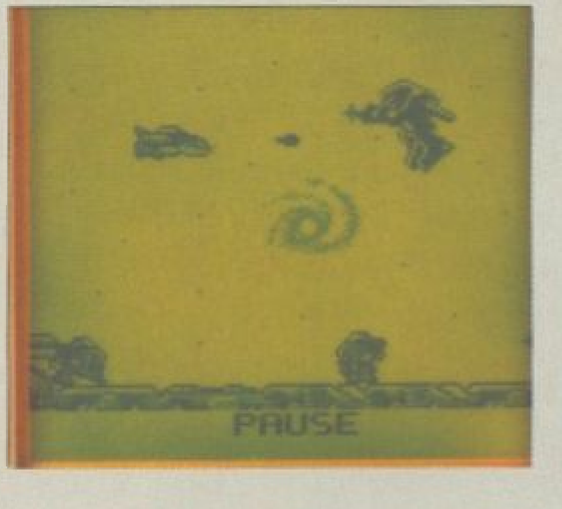


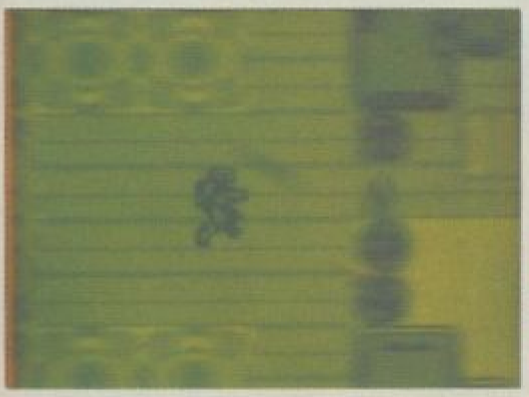
GAMEBOY

What the Gameboy lacks in kaleidoscopic colour it more than makes up for in definition and speed. Although it may seem like a minor point, it should be noted that the left thumb suffers an astonishing blister-inducing hammering during play.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEBOY £24.99 OUT NOW





BURAI FIGHTER DELUXE

Not too TAXAN, man

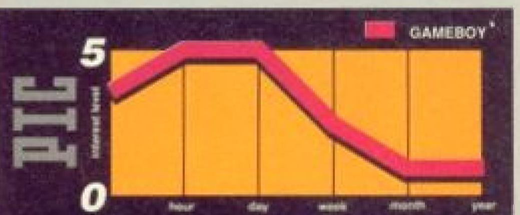
For thousands of years, the Burai have had but one objective... the conquest of the universe. Not only have they created huge armies of robo-mutants they've also signed up Max Boyce amd Mike Harding and Barbara Dickson for a interstellar tour. Your mission, understandably enough, is to stop this misery. So strap your proton pack on, charge up your laser cannon and get ready to blast some Burai.

Burai Fighter Deluxe is split into five different stages, each filled with scabby starfighters and Burai end-of-level boss sprites with fabby names such as Giganticrab, Jawsipede and Fangskull. If you hadn't guessed by now, this baby is yet another scrolling shoot'me-up. You start the game with a simple gun which can be upgraded to meaty missiles and rip-roaring rings.

The screen can scroll in all directions so it's quite easy to miss a pick-up, bonus or escape route. Sometimes the direction of the scroll changes to trap you on a ledge. Your journey is the same every time you play, so it's just a question of remembering to be at the right place at the right time. Most of the fun comes from exploring the little alcoves which can yield extra goodies. The aliens are pretty easy to destroy, you'll have more difficulty fiddling around with your direction of fire than handling this laser-canon fodder.

The backdrop graphics and boss sprites are fine, but the small size of the sprites is disappointing. A little more effort should have gone into creating the music and sound-effects too. Those broken dishwasher bleeps and pings just don't cut it. Were the wrong notes intentional? Have I missed a new Japanese audio craze? I think not.

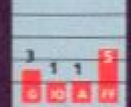
●**Rik Haynes**



Plenty of action, plenty of blasting, plenty of fun... in the short term. The slight exploration element is an interesting plus over *R-Type*, but *Burai* can't compete in the longevity stakes.

ACE RATING

781



GAMEBOY

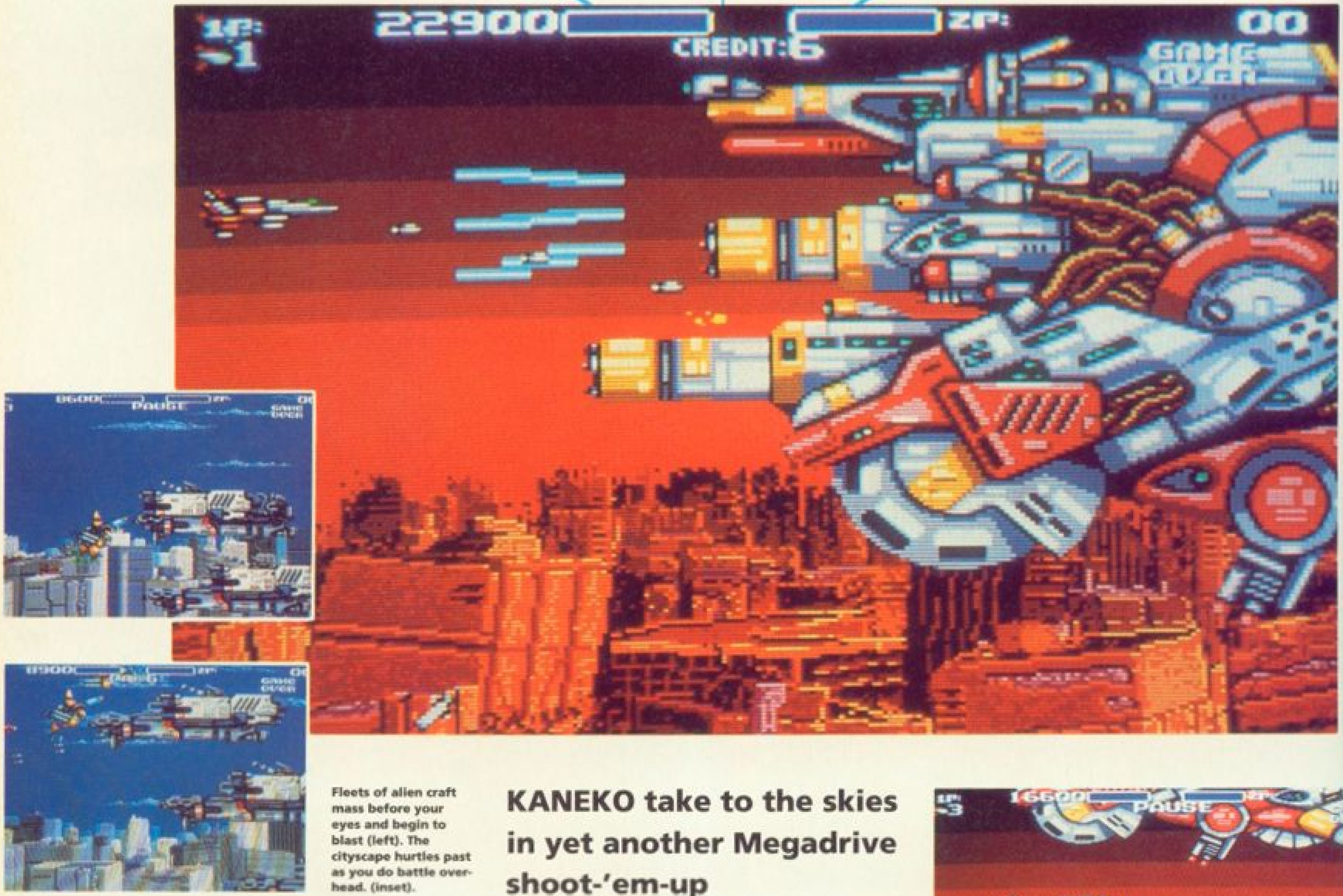
This title is just a little too easy to master. I'm afraid *Burai Fighter Deluxe* comes a poor second in the great Gameboy gunfight this month. Still, it's worth considering if *R-Type* is out of stock at the time. You'll have to turn down the irritating audio, though.

RELEASE DETAILS

GAMEBOY £24.99 OUT NOW

Special thanks to Shekana Consoles (081 340 8565) for supplying this cart.

AERO BLASTERS



Fleets of alien craft mass before your eyes and begin to blast (left). The cityscape hurtles past as you do battle overhead. (inset).

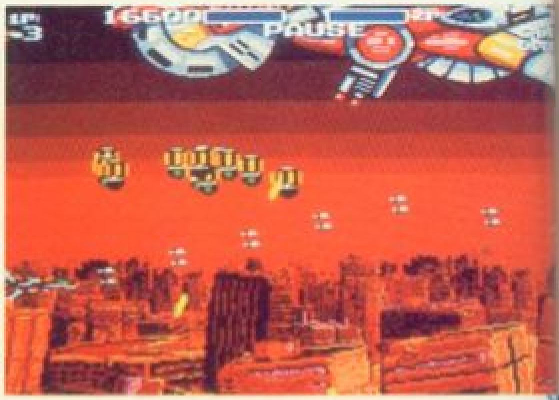
KANEKO take to the skies in yet another Megadrive shoot-'em-up

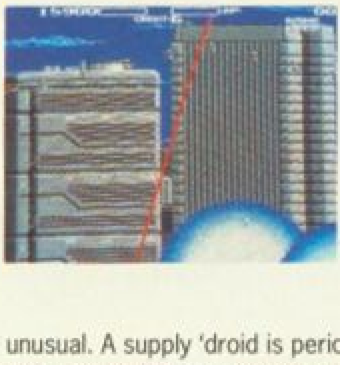
Can Megadrive owners bear yet another shoot-'em-up? Kaneko obviously think so. *Aero-Blasters* is yet another in the long line of turn-the-handle-and-crank-'em-out horizontally-scrolling firefights. Anyone who's played a modern blaster will know the score: fight your way through a seemingly endless supply of alien scum, picking up power-ups and bolt-ons along the way, to a final confrontation with a massive guardian.

To be fair, *Aero-Blasters* does have a few features which, if not completely novel, at least add spice to a somewhat-stale brew. For a start there's the option for two players to simultaneously take on the alien might.

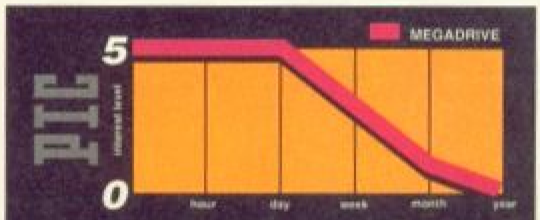
Then, on some levels, there are areas where the caverns narrow to ridiculously-thin tunnels. If that were not enough, the scrolling increases to hyper-fast speeds. Somehow you've got to try and avoid smashing into the walls. Believe me, it'll leave your joypad drenched in sweat!

The power-ups are impressive yet familiar, though the way that they're obtained is a little unusual. A supply 'droid is periodically despatched from home base to help you out. Shooting it a couple of times causes a stream of power-ups to be jettisoned into the air. You then have a few seconds to try and pick the





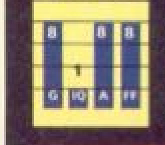
Swirling bomblets fall from the sky (above). Doing battle with the enormous end-of-level guardian is not to be taken lightly (left).



Aero-Blasters certainly gets the adrenaline pumping, with its vicious onslaught of enemy ships and wide range of impressively powerful bolt-ons, but the ability to tinker with the game's leniency via the 'Option' screen means that even the poorest player should be able to complete the measly six levels in under a week.

ACE RATING

785

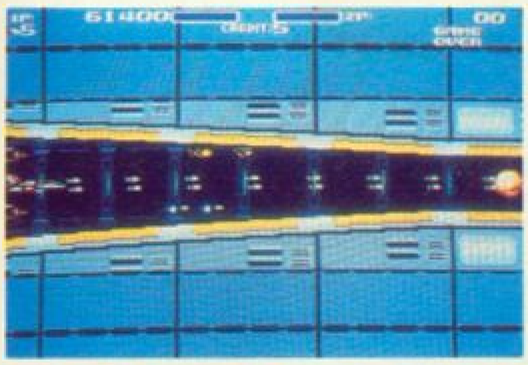


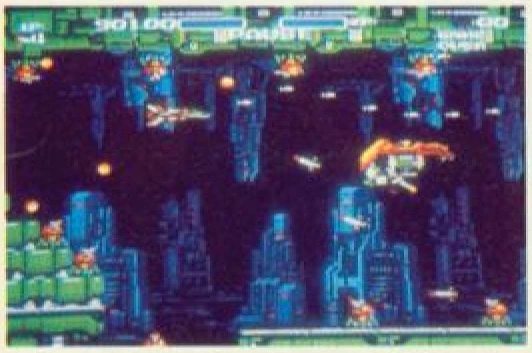
MEGADRIVE

Technically *Aero-Blasters* is superb: super-fast multi-layer parallax scrolling, hordes of giant alien sprites, swarms of missiles and pounding bangs and booms. The graphic design is a little uninspired and uninspiring, but what the Hell? This is a decent-enough blaster; just don't expect to be playing it in a couple of weeks time.

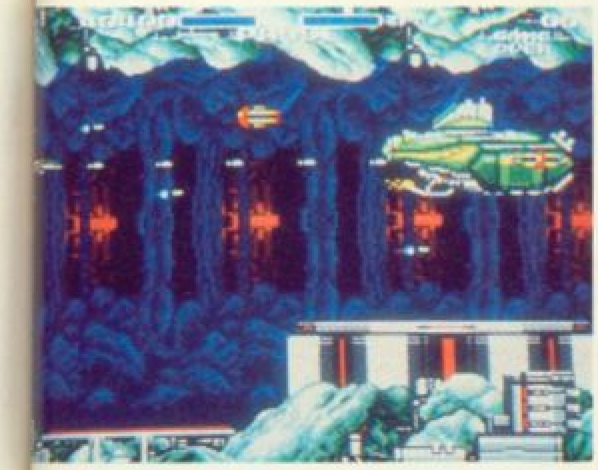
RELEASE DETAILS

MEGADRIVE	£25.99	OUT NOW





It's the contrast in Aero that makes you go "Oh!" Narrowing passages scream past at highest speed testing your flying skills at the limit (Top), while an alien-intensive wave (above) is more of a test of your trigger finger. End of level guardians are nothing basically new, but at least they are polished and have their innovative touche (below).



ones you need before they drop off-screen.

Aero-Blasters has several design faults that detract from fun. And, in keeping with the game's unoriginal gameplay, you've seen them all before. There's the stupid game designer's favourite "Lose all your power-ups when you get killed" one and, from those lazy game designers who can't be bothered to think up new and exciting attack waves, there's the classic "Fill the screen with so many aliens and missiles that there's no way the player can possibly survive".

Niggles aside, the big problem with *Aero-Blasters* is its longevity, or rather lack of it - and this tends to be the case with a lot of Megadrive games. Playing on 'Normal' difficulty with six credits of three lives each got me to the end of the fourth level on my second go - and there are only six levels in all. Admittedly there's an 'Options' screen where you can put the game on a higher difficulty setting and reduce the number of credits, but how many have the willpower to do that?

In the final analysis *Aero-Blasters* just about comes up to scratch. It plays well, the action's fast and sound's good. But if you're looking for a new twist on the genre or the ultimate shoot-'em-up challenge then you'd best look elsewhere.

●David Upchurch

MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE

How has DATA EAST's top-quality coin-op fared in its lengthy conversion to the Megadrive?

Some Megadrive releases have been disappointing. Some have been dull. Others have simply been uninspiring. *Midnight Resistance* is something of a first being downright shoddy.

Home computer owners may well remember Ocean's version of the game, which was excellent on virtually all formats. Alas, owners who have since purchased a Megadrive and wish to relive the thrills and spills of infiltrating and destroying a heavily guarded enemy base will be sorely disappointed.

The player begins, after some pleasant enough intro sequences, riding along atop a jeep driven by a flaxen-haired comrade. Immediately, he is confronted by a team of exceptionally agile assailants, who can kill him simply with a touch.

Initially armed with a rapid-firing machine gun, the player can fire in virtually any direction, being able to crouch down, lie flat on the floor, fire directly up and down, as well as firing on the run. It's here that *Midnight Resistance* runs into its first difficulties. Offering such a wide number of possible positions means that there's no 'cushion' area on the pad. If you want to fire diagonally down and right, you have to put the controller in exactly the right position. Partially owing to the imprecise nature of the control pad, and particularly owing to the necessity to aim in an extremely accurate manner, you will continually find yourself on the receiving end of a bad guy's fire whom you simply couldn't point your gun at.

Despite these frustrations, the first level is okay, and while the animations for the sprites are basic to say the least, you can warm to the game's healthy exuberance and continual blasting.

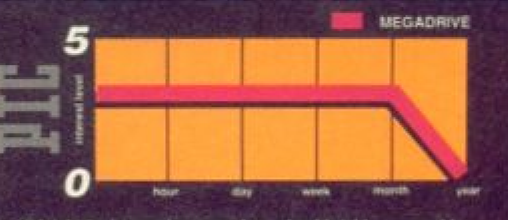
The end of each level leads you to a shop where, depending on the number of keys collected in the last stage, you can 'buy' extra weapons. There's three-way fire, a flamethrower, a more beefy laser and extra ammunition, each offering an easier route through the next stage.

On the second stage, however, the cracks really start to show. As you work down the level, the status area and your on-screen persona remain visible, while the rest of the screen setup absolutely falls apart, appearing a second or so afterwards, scrolling down from the top in fantastically ugly manner. Any hopes the designers may have harboured about creating some sort of atmosphere are instantly dashed. It's like having some really fat smelly bloke coming into the cinema and sitting down beside you when the film's been running for ten minutes.

Indeed, the whole game is spoiled with rough-edge coding and an unpleasant feel.

If there were any Megadrive gamers still happy to buy a coin-op conversion simply because of their fondness for the original, Midnight Resistance should convince them otherwise.

● Jim Douglas



Midnight Resistance, by name alone, should yield a reasonable amount of interest, but things never get better and the game fails to achieve even an above-average amount of fun quality.

ACE RATING

680

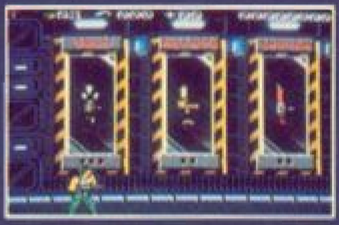
G	IQ	A	FF
5	2	3	5

MEGADRIVE

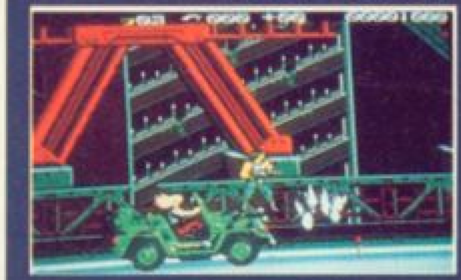
There's absolutely no reason why the Megadrive version should be in any way inferior to the 16-bit versions, but it manages to fail on virtually all fronts. Avoid.

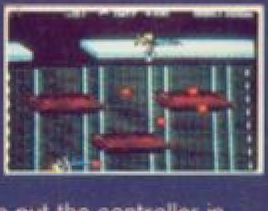
RELEASE DETAILS

MEGADRIVE	£34.99	OUT NOW



The Store Room. Keys can be exchanged for extra weapons, armour and bullets. The better the weapon, the more keys you need.



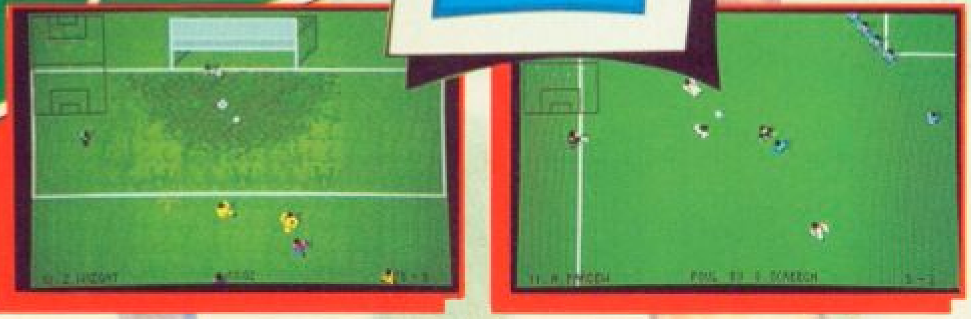


The game looks okay to begin with, as you ride into town atop your fellow comrade's jeep (above). Things deteriorate swiftly, though, when the horrific vertical scrolling begins (right).

KICK OFF 2

A NEW DI
SOCCER S

-GOLDEN JOYSTICK-
GAME OF THE YEAR
1 9 9 1


Amiga Screen Shots

- BLISTERING PACE
- PIXEL PERFECT PASSING
- SUPERB TACTICAL GAMEPLAY

KICK OFF 2 greatly enhances the gameplay of KICK OFF, winner of the THE GAME OF THE YEAR in the U.K., and similar awards right across Europe. A host of new features have been added to the ones that enthralled players the world over.

- **Full size multi-directional scrolling pitch with the players, markings etc. in correct proportion.**
- **1 to 4 players option. (Amiga and ST only)**
- **2 players TEAM option against the computer or 2 other players. Hundreds of players each with a unique combination of attributes (stamina, pace, etc.) and skills (passing, shooting, tackling, etc.)**
- **Instinctive Kick Off joystick controls to dribble, pass, shoot, head or chip the ball and do sliding tackles.**
- **Set piece. FREE KICKS including dummies and the ability to dip the ball or bend the ball round a defensive wall.**
- **9 types of corner kicks with full control of shot power. Long and short throw ins.**
- **Team selection from a squad of 16 with substitution and a choice of tactics.**
- **League and cup competitions with Extra Time, Injury Time and sudden death penalty shoot outs.**
- **Facility to view, edit and save the Action Replays and create a Golden Shots disc.(Excl. IBM & CBM 64)**
- **Facility to load Player Manager teams and tactics for a single or league game.**
- **Red and yellow cards, 16 different referees, injury time and a host of features to create an atmosphere for a game which is real fun to play.**

ST ACTION - The best game ever to grace the ST. Highest accolade I can give.
AMIGA USER INT - The best computer game ever **97%**
THE ONE - Ultimate soccer simulation. **96%**
THE ACE - Brilliant. Buy, Buy, Buy. **930.**
AMIGA FORMAT - Best footy game to have appeared on any machine. **94%**
ST FORMAT - What a game! Gem to play. Magic. **90%**
C & VG - Championship winning material. **95%**
GAMES MACHINE - Probably the best sports game ever. **92%**
COMMODORE USER - No other footie game can touch it. **90%**
AMIGA ACTION - Surpasses all other football games. **93%**
POPULAR COMPUTING WEEKLY - Nothing short of brilliant.
NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS - Computer football event of the year.

AMIGA & ST £19.99 EXP. AMIGA £24.99
IBM (AT & XT Turbo, EGA & VGA) £24.99
CBM 64 - SPECTRUM - AMSTRAD £9.99, £14.99

An International class player takes charge of a third division club as Player Manager. His brief is simple -**Bring Back The Glory Days.**

His success depends on his playing skills on the pitch and managerial skills in devising winning tactics, aquiring the right players from the transfer market and building a team worthy of the highest honours.

- **Unique facility to design and implement your own tactics.**
- **Over 1000 individual players, each with a unique combination of attributes and skills.**
- **A lively transfer market. Haggle for the best deal.**
- **4 division league and a cup tournament with sudden death penalty shoot out.**

The Player Manager brings the every day realities of a manager's life, his talents as a manager and a player, his triumphs and his failures into a sharp FOCUS.

ST. ACTION - A stroke of pure genius.
THE ONE - An exceptional football management simulation. Astounding depth. Most involved, rewarding and playable.
THE ACE - Successfully blends challenging soccer management with frantic end to end arcade action. **920**
NEW COMPUTER EXPRESS - The sheer depth is incredible. A definitive management game.
COMMODORE USER - At last a management game that requires true management skills - a winner. **94%**
ST FORMAT - Brilliant. **93%**
AMIGA FORMAT - Enthralling and addictive. **93%**
ZZAP - Best football management game ever written. **92%**

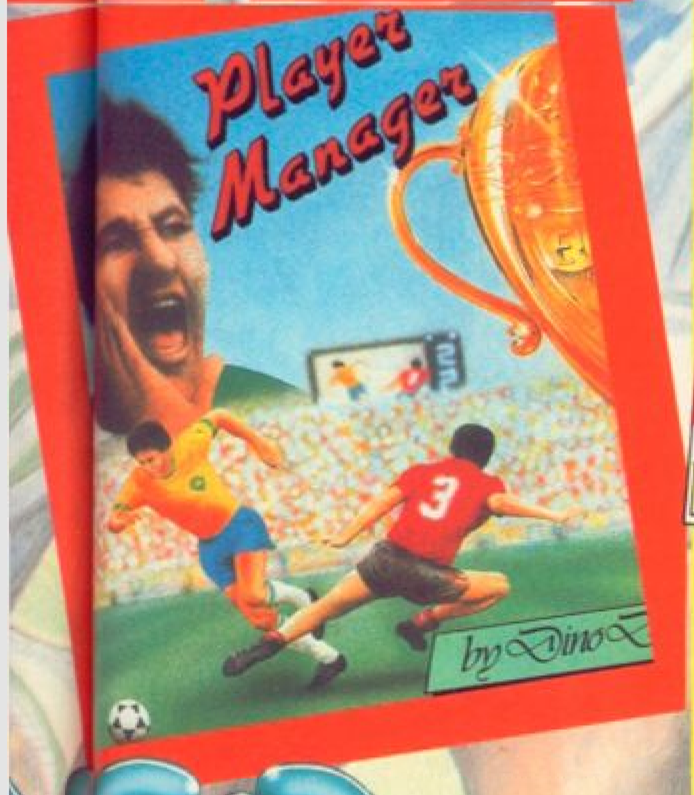
AMIGA - ST £19.99

DIENSION IN
SIULATIONS

R

4%

Player Information
Name
Position
Defender
Age
31
Height
176 cm
Weight
80 Kg
Pace
Agility
Stamina
Resilience
Aggression
41
Skills
Passing
Shooting
Tackling
Keeping
History
Done


Player Manager
by Dino D

THE FINAL WHISTLE

Amiga - ST £12.99 (Rel. Nov.)

Raises the skills required and gameplay of KICK OFF 2 to new heights.

Two extra kits.
Look at any player stats. (attributes and skill) before selecting squad.
Totally new corner kicks with full control of the power, height and trajectory of the ball.
Enhanced throw ins and penalty shots.
Provision to flick the ball in the air and do a blinding header or a spectacular overhead kick.
New two players team mode. Player 1 in position or nearest to the ball and player 2 in position or keeper.
Linesmen and referee on the pitch.
A new player attribute FLAIR. A player with a high level of flair will try a solo attempt at the goal.
4 new pitches - Wembley - Icy - Muddy - Non-League

And Lot's More

WINNING TACTICS (£6.99 - Rel. Nov.) - A collection of tactics for use in Player Manager or KO2 with full explanations.
RETURN TO EUROPE (£9.99 - Rel. Dec.) - Three European cup competitions. UEFA cup - European Cup - Cup Winners Cup.
GIANTS OF EUROPE (Rel. 1991) Best teams of Europe on one disc.

KICK OFF 2
DATA DISK
ANCO
FINAL WHISTLE

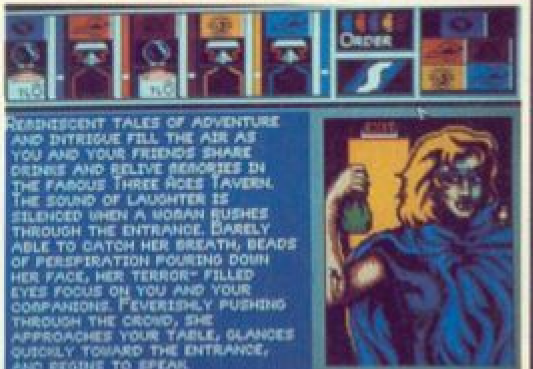
Draft specifications. Subject to changes without notice

ANCO

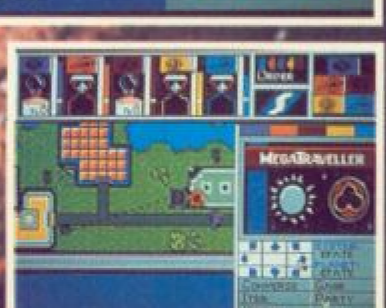
ANCO SOFTWARE, UNIT 10, BURNHAM TRADING ESTATE, LAWSON ROAD, DARTFORD, KENT.
TELEPHONE No: 0322 92513/18 FAX No: 0322 93422

MEGATRAVELLER 1 - THE ZHODANI CONSPIRACY

A quantum leap for sci-fi RPGs? Well maybe... take on the Zhodani and s[illegible] for yourself



REMINISCENT TALES OF ADVENTURE AND INTRIGUE FILL THE AIR AS YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS SHARE DRINKS AND RELIVE MEMORIES IN THE FAMOUS THREE ACES TAVERN. THE SOUND OF LAUGHTER IS SILENCED WHEN A WOMAN RUSHES THROUGH THE ENTRANCE. BARELY ABLE TO CATCH HER BREATH, BEADS OF PERSPIRATION POURING DOWN HER FACE, HER TERROR- FILLED EYES FOCUS ON YOU AND YOUR COMPANIONS. FEVERISHLY PUSHING THROUGH THE CROWD, SHE APPROACHES YOUR TABLE, GLANCES QUICKLY TOWARD THE ENTRANCE, AND BEGINS TO SPEAK.



[illegible] touches [illegible] exactly [illegible] all a [illegible]

Based on the Games Designers' Workshop's world-famous gaming system, *Megatraveller 1* is the first in a series set in the 50th century universe of the human Imperium and the alien Zhodani, whose psionic powers and logical approach to conflicts lack only a set of pointed ears and green blood to make them positively Vulcan.

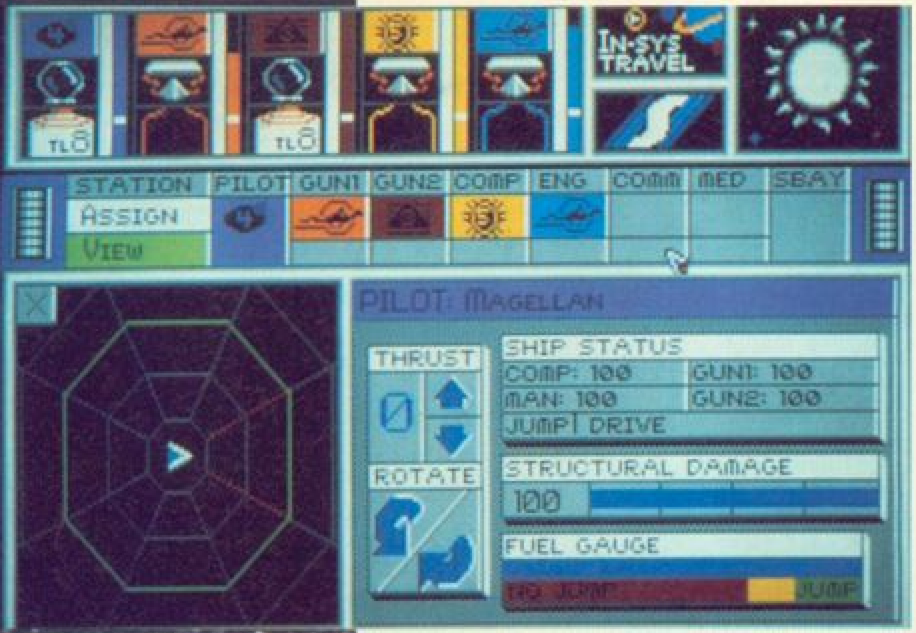
Like Isaac Asimov's science fiction, the universe of the Megatraveller RPGs is one conveniently occupied only by humanoids. This makes it easier to comprehend the desires and motivations of your opponents, but doesn't do much to add any exotic alien flavourings to this massive sci-fi adventure.

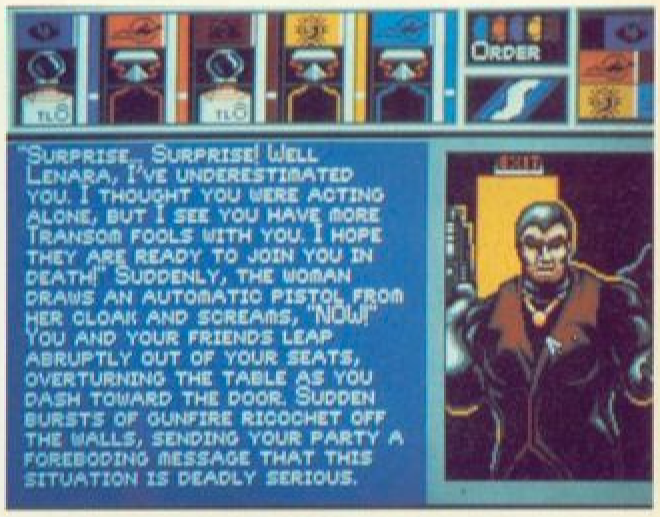
Like most RPGs, only the basic scenario of the game is set; in theory, the characters you design and your approach to the adventure are completely free. Certainly, there are a vast number of options; unless you opt for the easy life and accept the default party of characters, you can choose your characters from five military classes including army, navy, marines, merchants and scouts; allot them experience points in over 70 fields, including such exotic skills as gambling, high-gravity work, forgery, bribery, cooking, sub-machine gunning and carousing (!).

Having defined your five characters or accepted the defaults, you move to a main screen where text appears on the left, pictures on the right, and status reports for your characters at the top.

The scenario involves a Zhodani plot to instigate another border war with the help of corrupt Imperium officials. An Imperium agent gives you the info you need, and a large bag of credits as incentive, prompting you to set off for the planet Boughene. Before you do that, you have to survive a gunfight, buy various weapons, computer programs and supplies, make you way to the spaceport and board your ship.

In the course of the game you will have to interact with other characters, entering into dialogue with them (of such sparkling quality as "greetings fellow traveller"), asking them for information,


IN-SYS TRAVEL
STATION
PILOT
GUN1
GUN2
COMP
ENG
COMM
MED
SBAY
ASSIGN
VIEW
PILOT: MAGELLAN
THRUST
ROTATE
SHIP STATUS
COMP: 100
GUN1: 100
MAN: 100
GUN2: 100
JUMP DRIVE
STRUCTURAL DAMAGE
100
FUEL GAUGE
NO JUMP
JUMP



"SURPRISE... SURPRISE! WELL LENARA, I'VE UNDERESTIMATED YOU. I THOUGHT YOU WERE ACTING ALONE, BUT I SEE YOU HAVE MORE TRANSOM FOOLS WITH YOU. I HOPE THEY ARE READY TO JOIN YOU IN DEATH!" SUDDENLY, THE WOMAN DRAWS AN AUTOMATIC PISTOL FROM HER CLOAK AND SCREAMS, "NOW!" YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS LEAP ABRUPTLY OUT OF YOUR SEATS, OVERTURNING THE TABLE AS YOU DASH TOWARD THE DOOR. SUDDEN BURSTS OF GUNFIRE RICOCHET OFF THE WALLS, SENDING YOUR PARTY A FOREBODING MESSAGE THAT THIS SITUATION IS DEADLY SERIOUS.

buying objects and information, and sometimes blowing them to pieces.

The action arcade sequences, such as the gunfight at the bar, are irritatingly difficult to control; it takes place in a small window viewed from above, your party represented by a single large purple figure. To fight effectively as the enemy gunmen close in and start zapping you, you must divide your party, select a character, choose a weapon to use, return to the animated display, move a cursor, hit the fire icon... spontaneous it ain't, and it's much easier simply to run away from a fight.

Once you have gained the starport you have to trade for navigation programs, weapons and supplies, before boarding your ship and blasting off.

The ship, Interloper, has both in-system and Jump drives; on the Jump display screen, the 28 planets and satellites of the eight systems you have to explore are depicted on a hexagonal grid system. Your space jumps are limited to the distance of two hexagons at a time, though we are promised that later *Megatraveller* games will feature 6-hex jump drives!

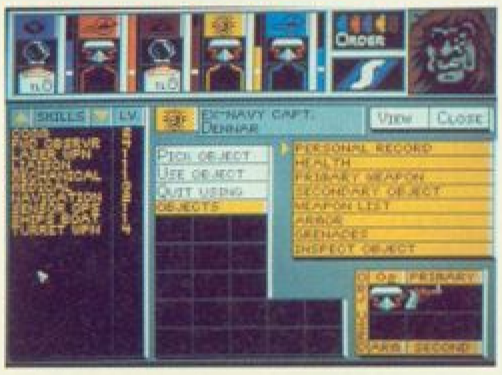
Megatraveller is an extremely complex game; every facet of the scenario, from the background and abilities of your characters to the ship's navigation, computer, weapons, communications and life-support systems, to the type of ground underfoot and your chance of smuggling a weapon through a checkpoint, are covered in almost ridiculous detail. This serves more to slow down the action than to increase the excitement; I know RPG's are supposed to be about thought and strategy rather than blasting, but Megatraveller occasionally slows down to the pace of a particularly nasty traffic jam on the North Circular.

The PC version of the game comes on two 3.5 inch disks with a colour starmap poster and a 140-page spiral-bound manual. Its VGA graphics are colourful but not overly imaginative; the starship control screens, for instance, are heavily text-oriented, and the planetary surface maps not particularly detailed. Some of the 3-D space combat screens are entertaining, but the animation is not particularly fast.

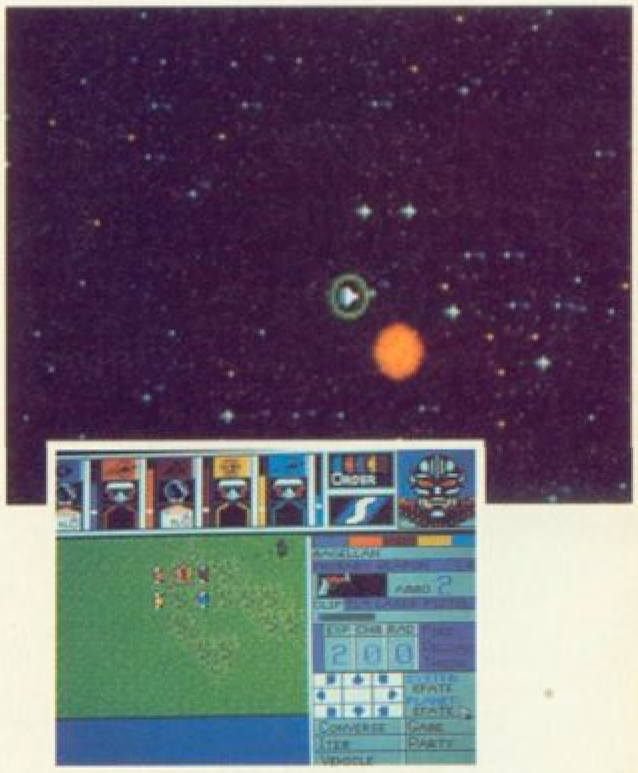
There are some digitised sounds, which are hardly worth the effort, but the game also supports the more impressive AdLib and RealSound sound cards.

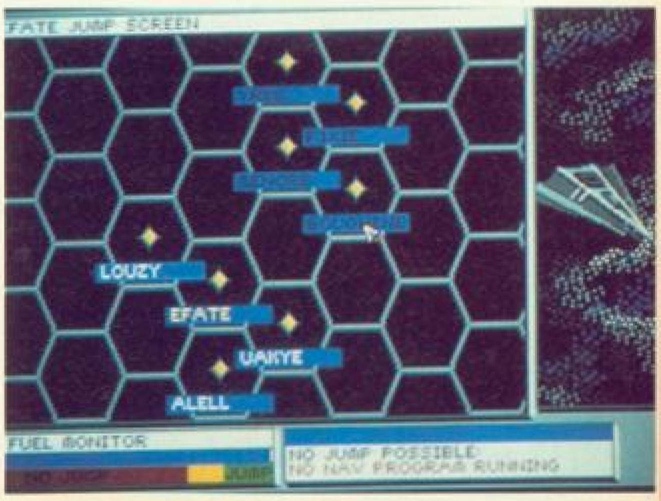
Overall this could be a very absorbing game for an experienced and dedicated RPG player, but is unlikely to generate enough excitement to suck in the beginner.

● Chris Jenkins


ORDER
SKILLS
LV
EX-NAVY CAPT.
DENNAR
VIEW
CLOSE
PICK OBJECT
USE OBJECT
QUIT USING
OBJECTS
PERSONAL RECORD
HEALTH
PRIMARY WEAPON
SECONDARY OBJECT
WEAPON LIST
ARMOR
GRENADES
INSPECT OBJECT
PRIMARY
SECOND

Strategy fans may find that although Megatravveler offers some entertaining quirks, they may well have already seen better.

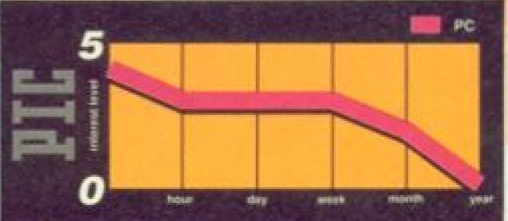

ORDER
CONVERSE
GAME
PARTY
EFATE


LOUZY
EFATE
UAKYE
ALELL
NO JUMP
JUMP

EFATE JUMP SCREEN

FUEL MONITOR

NO JUMP POSSIBLE
NO NAV PROGRAM RUNNING



Too complicated and slow for the average player, though it might appeal to RPG fanatics

ACE RATING
702

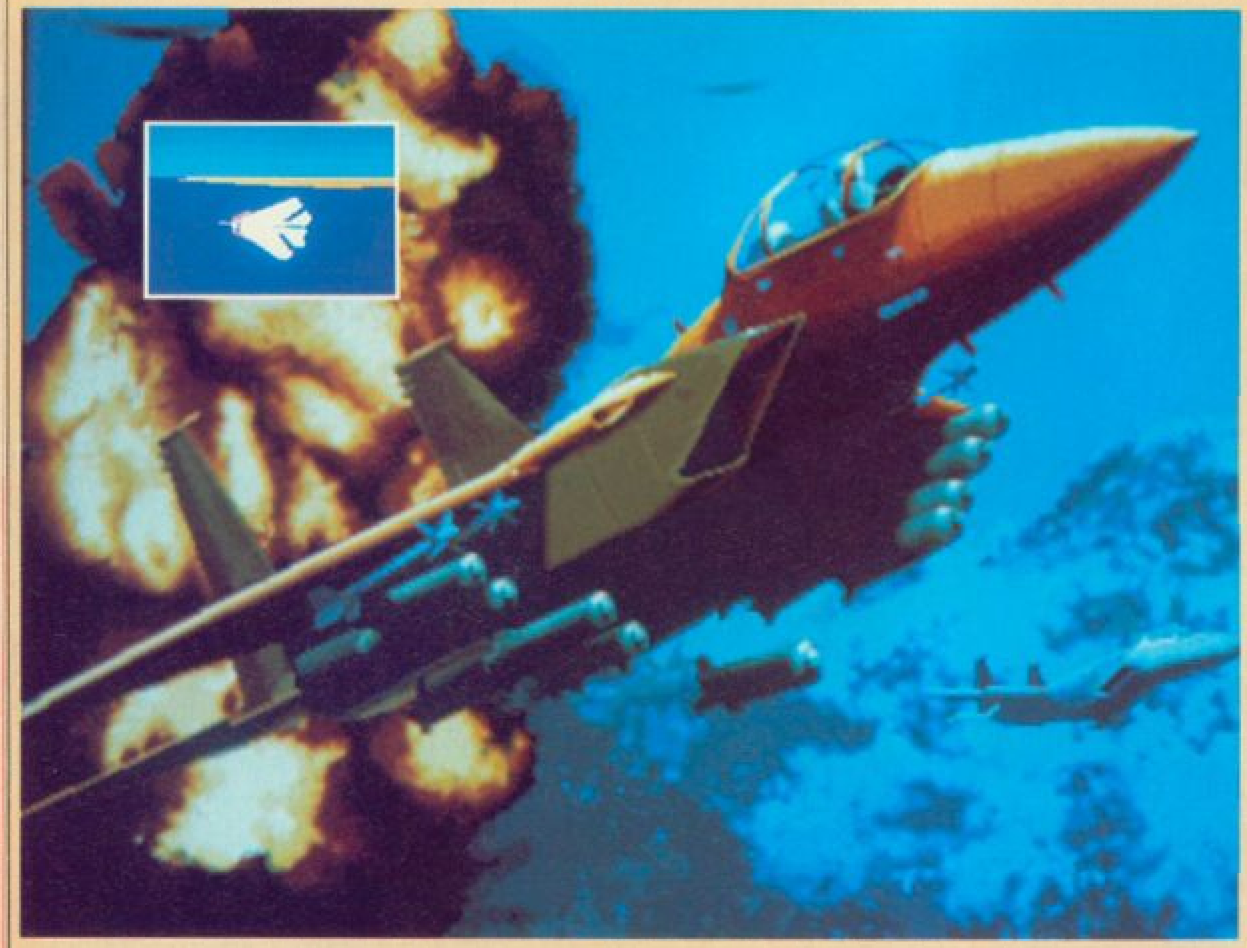
G	IQ	A	FF
7	7	5	6

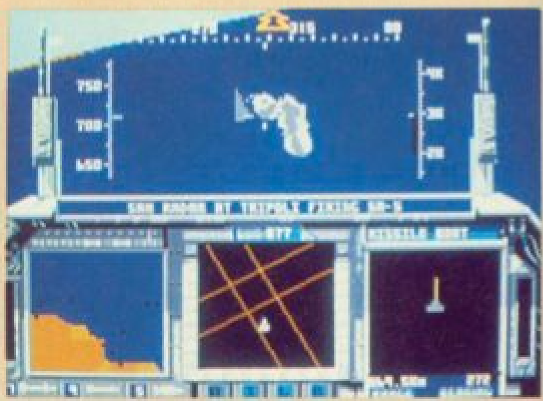
IBM PC

Despite a wealth of detail, The Zhodani Conspiracy doesn't have an exciting enough scenario or impressive enough design to make much impact. Possibly later adventures in the series will be more exciting, but if this one doesn't grab you, you probably won't be inclined to find out. A pity, because a great deal of work has obviously been put into the game's development.

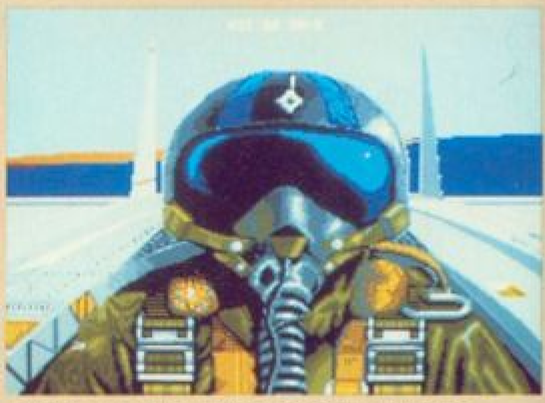
RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£24.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£24.99	IMMINENT
IBM PC	£24.99	IMMINENT

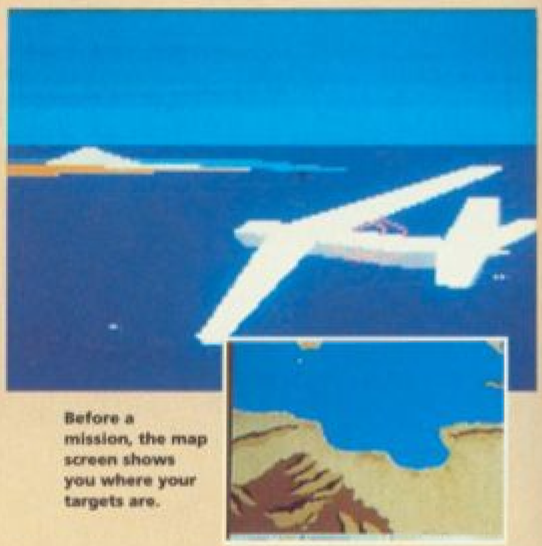



SAM RADAR AT TRIPOLI FIRING SA-5

F-15 features a whole host of surface objects, including this aircraft carrier. Some missions begin - and more problematically end - on this floating fortress.



A whole range of views from the cockpit are available.



Before a mission, the map screen shows you where your targets are.

F-15 II

MICROPROSE opt for the "action sim" with their new *coin-op conversion?*

Microprose's *F-15* coin-op has proved to be a pretty big hit in the states, and you'll be able to get your hands on the joystick of one in the UK pretty soon (unless you visit the Trocadero in London where they) have one already).

The coin-op, designed by Microprose themselves, was pitched at a high-brow arcade player sick of mashing sprites but still after some pretty instant gratification.

This computer version, therefore, is aimed at the low-end simulations market. It bypasses all the fiddling around with cabin pressures and radar beacons and enables the player to get pretty much into the action from the off. You don't even hand to land the plane for yourself if you don't want to. And let's be honest, the fun of these game is wasting the enemy birds, not trying to put all three wheels down at the right time.

The most important distinction between the two is that while the coin-op would feed players pretty specific instructions as to their next target and it's whereabouts, *F-15* on home machines allows a bit more flexibility.

And the way it's shaping up so far, the title looks as if this not especially depthy game may well become a storming success for the company who built its reputation on producing heavyweight simulations.

Revolving naturally around a series of seek-and-destroy missions in such global beauty spots as the Middle East, Vietnam, Lybia and the Persian Gulf, the game arms the player with variable cargos of air-to-air and air-to-ground missiles, as well as around a thousand rounds of rapid-fire cannon shells.

Incoming missiles can be deflected by dropping clouds of aluminium chaff, on top of those Top-Gun escape rolls.

It's far more score-orientated than previous games from Microprose, awarding points for virtually every part of the mission where there's some skill involved. Take out a bad guy with your cannon and chase him into the ground and you'll score more points than if you simply loose off a missile and let it do all the hard work.

A range of views from both inside and outside the 'plane is available and there's even an in-missile view, so you can ensure that your prey hasn't eluded its date with doom.

For gamesters who are keen to add a flight simulator to their catalogue, but are less impressed with hefty manuals and flight paths, *F-15* could be the answer.

● **Richard Evans**

ACE PREPLAY

- Nice and fast
- Non-fiddly pacing
- Sizeable playing area
- Lots of missions

- Purists may want more realistic flight 'n' fight.

Release Details

AMIGA	£24.99	July
ATARI ST	£24.99	July
IBM PC	£24.99	OUT NOW

AMIGA MEGADRIVE ST SEGA SUPER FAMICOM
C64 AMSTRAD PC ENGINE NINTENDO PC LYNX

10.00 DM 4500 L
380 Ptas S$8.10
£1.35

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COLLECT THE SET AND WIN A
SUPER FAMICOM!!

OUT NOW

SUPER!

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG!!
CAN SEGA'S NEW HERO OUT-CUTE MARIO!??

SONIC
THE HEDGEHOG
SEGA
PRESS START BUTTON
©SEGA 1991

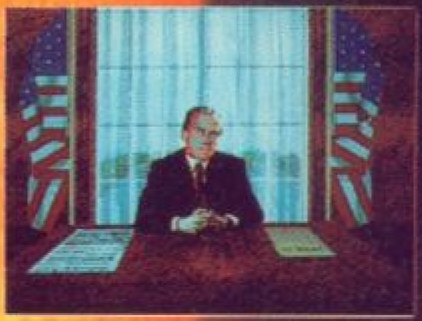
STREET FIGHTER II

ストリートファイター II

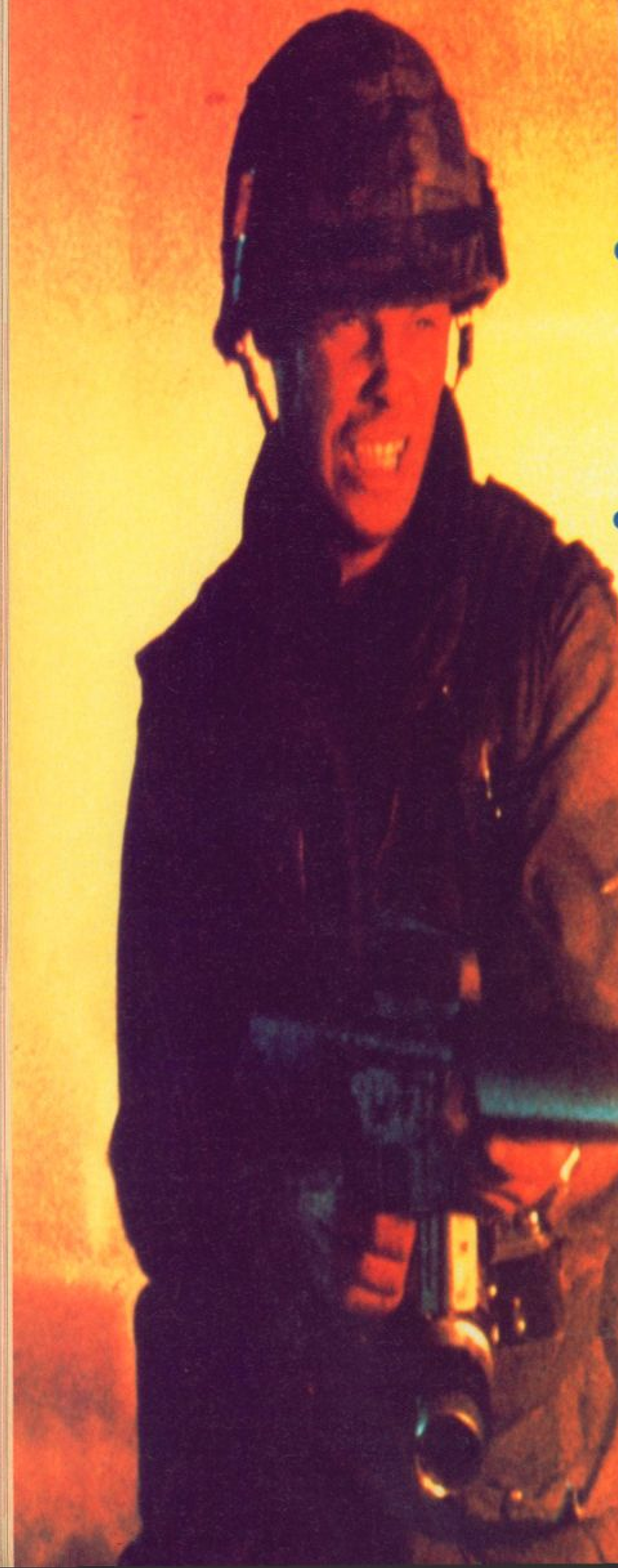
STATE OF THE ART ARCADE VIOLENCE!!
EXPOSED INSIDE...

EXCLUSIVE!

JETFIGHTER 2
TOP GUN EAT YER HEART OUT!!



This is the place where all the decisions are made. With the option play either good-guy Johnson or the considerably less popular Nixon. 'Nam immediately presents you with some tough decisions.



NA

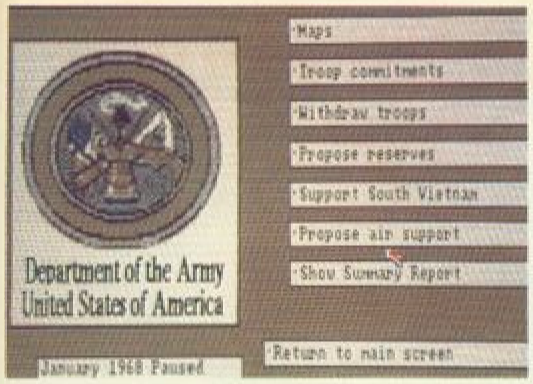
Take a holiday in Cambodia and check out DOMARK's military/political simulation

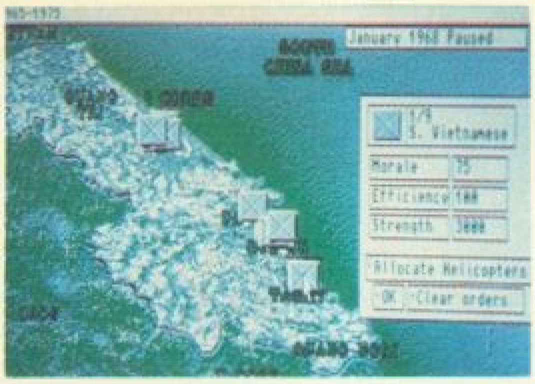
With *The Doors* on the radio all the time, the Gulf War putting everyone in the mood for a good barney, and 70s fashion once more filling our streets with strange sights, what better time to launch a game based on the Vietnam War?

Domark's strategy title, *'Nam*, is a little unusual in combining both political and military aspects; it's not enough to win the war, you must also win the hearts and minds of your people if you want to remain in power. The game covers the period 1965-1975, so you have a choice of playing either President Nixon or Johnson. Your main problem, as it explains in the historical section of the comprehensive manual, is that your Viet Cong opponents do not really have to win; all they have to do is stick it out until you are exhausted, and forced to withdraw. If you follow the real-life American military policy, you will inevitably lose, so to win a convincing victory you have to come up with some strategy which evidently escaped the best American military minds of the time.

The PC version comes on four 5.25 inch disks or two 3.5 inch, complete with a thick manual and colour posters. In EGA mode the graphics are fair, but design is not too imaginative; the Amiga version looks nicer, while the ST is disappointing.

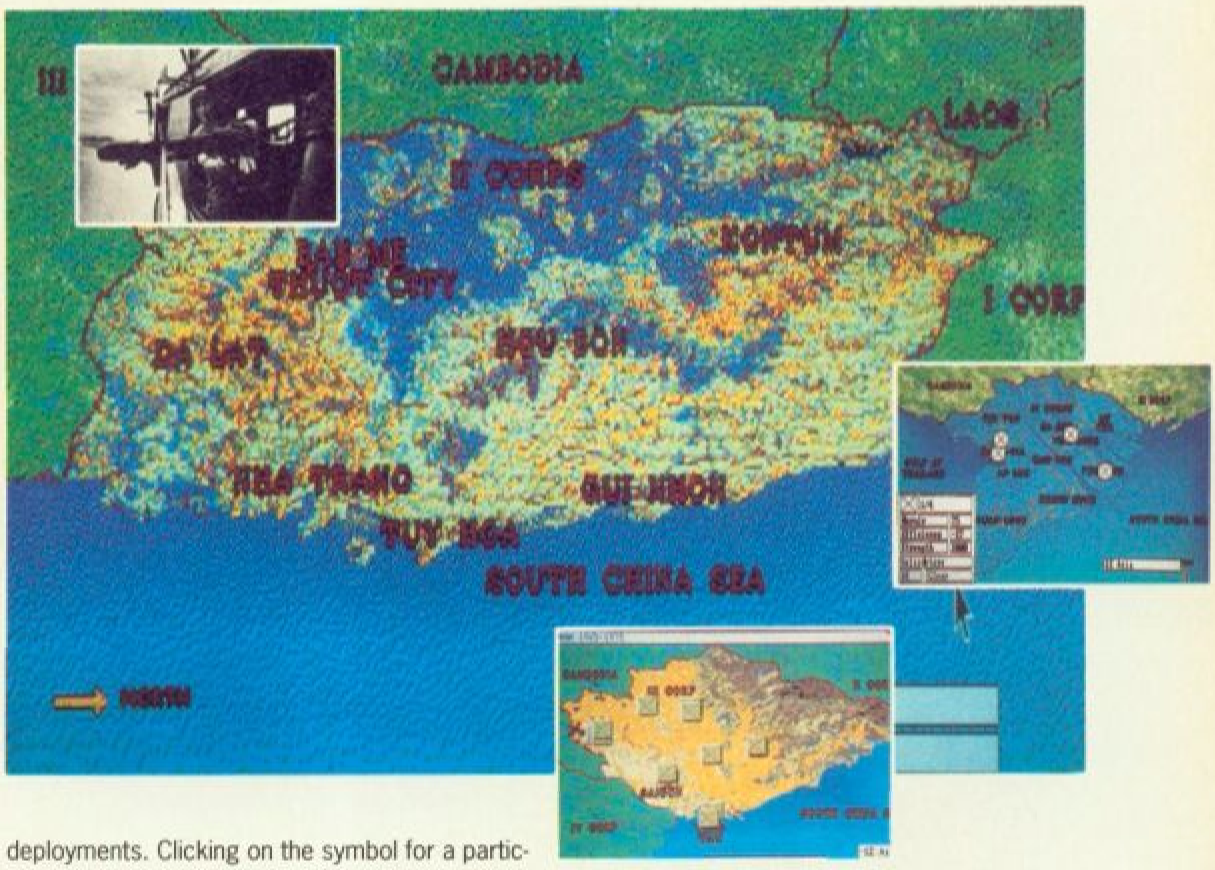
The loading screens feature digitised images of troops and helicopters, together with suitably military sampled music; after choosing your required language, you move from here to select one of five scenarios. These include two where you have to fight the war from the start, either as Nixon or as Johnson; and three which avoid much of the political manoeuvering, including the


Maps
Troop commitments
Withdraw troops
Propose reserves
Support South Vietnam
Propose air support
Show Summary Report
Department of the Army
United States of America
Return to main screen
January 1968 Paused


January 1968 Paused
1/4
S. Vietnamese
Morale 75
Efficiency 100
Strength 3000
Allocate Helicopters
OK
Clear orders
SOUTH CHINA SEA

The overall menu is helpful eough and easy to follow. (Far left) Close-proximity maps indicate thee current volume and strength of viet-con troops. (left)

M


III
CAMBODIA
LAOS
II CORPS
KONTUM
BAN ME THUOT CITY
I CORP
DA LAT
BUU SON
NHA TRANG
QUI NHON
TUY HOA
SOUTH CHINA SEA
NORTH

South-East Asia proved to be a tragically hostile environment. US Troops were continually foiled by their surroundings, outmatched by Charlie's superior knowledge of the country. (Inset above) Helicopter gunships are a much safer way to perform ground clearances.

Tet offensive, a major North Vietnamese push of 1968; Khe Sahn, a bloody conflict featuring US Marines dug in on a plateau with heavy air support; and the 1975 Spring offensive.

If you choose a full campaign, you start in the Oval Room with a portrait of the President; in front of him are two piles, one of newspapers and the other of official reports. Click on one to bring up headlines which give you an idea of the progress of the war and the mood of the nation, and the other to issue orders.

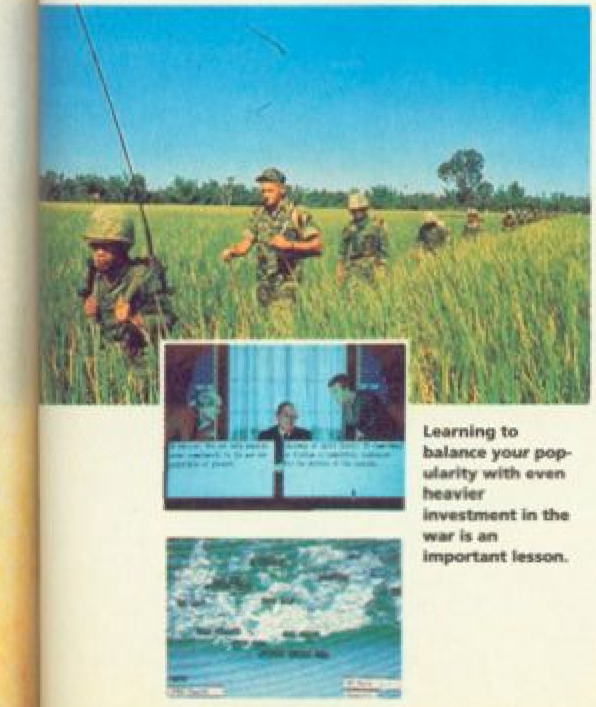
The reports index has eight options; the first is Maps. This gives you a colourful map of the whole Indo-China area, and by clicking on specific areas you get close-ups showing troop deployments. Clicking on the symbol for a particular unit brings up a display of its name, nationality, *strength, efficiency, morale and so on;* moves are entered by clicking on a unit and then on a new location on the map. An 'order path' appears on the screen, and the forces will begin to move at a speed determined by its equipment, the terrain and so on. If you have sufficient airpower you can 'airmobilise' a foot unit; this is particularly valuable when guerilla forces pop up unexpectedly and engage your forces in weak areas.

Back to the President's report screen, and other options allow you to commit troops to the conflict or withdraw them, commit reserves, send financial aid to South Vietnam, commit air support, display a summary screen featuring the all-important allied/communist 'kill ratio', or return to the main screen. These options are in effect budget proposals for the American government, and will not come into effect until the next financial year, so forward planning is essential.

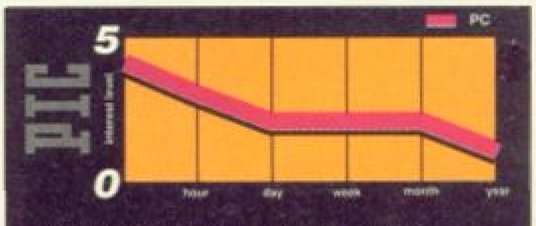
'Nam is a well thought-out simulation which none-the-less is rather dull to play; a bit like the war itself, it's a game of half-hearted attacks, strategic withdrawals and inconclusive battles.The graphics are decent but not too imaginative, and the icons for separate units could be clearer; *apart from the intro music,* sound is minimal.

If you are particularly interested in the Vietnam campaign, either from a political or military standpoint,this is a worthy simulation; if you like your war a bit more exciting, perhaps you should look elsewhere.

● **Chris Jenkins**

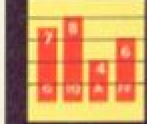


Learning to balance your popularity with even heavier investment in the war is an important lesson.



Accurate but slow-moving political/military simulation

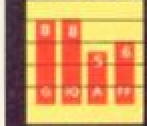
ACE RATING
700



IBM PC

While 'Nam has a good deal going for it in terms of historical accuracy and political background, it doesn't feature any of the graphical gimmicks which alleviate the repetitive nature of the average military simulation. The nature of the war, too, makes the game somewhat unsatisfying: it's very difficult to win a conclusive victory, as the Americans discovered in

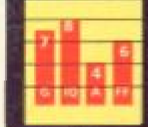
ACE RATING
710



AMIGA

Excellent sampled theme music, though very little else in the way of audio effects; faster gameplay than the PC version, though there's a good deal of disk-changing which becomes tedious. Screen layouts too are imperfect, with large blank areas on some screens.

ACE RATING
700



ATARI ST

The sampled music is less ambitious, and for some reason the colour scheme chosen for the graphics is extremely washed-out. This has a particularly bad effect in the portraits of the Presidents, who both look as if they have been bombed back to the Stone Age...

RELEASE DETAILS

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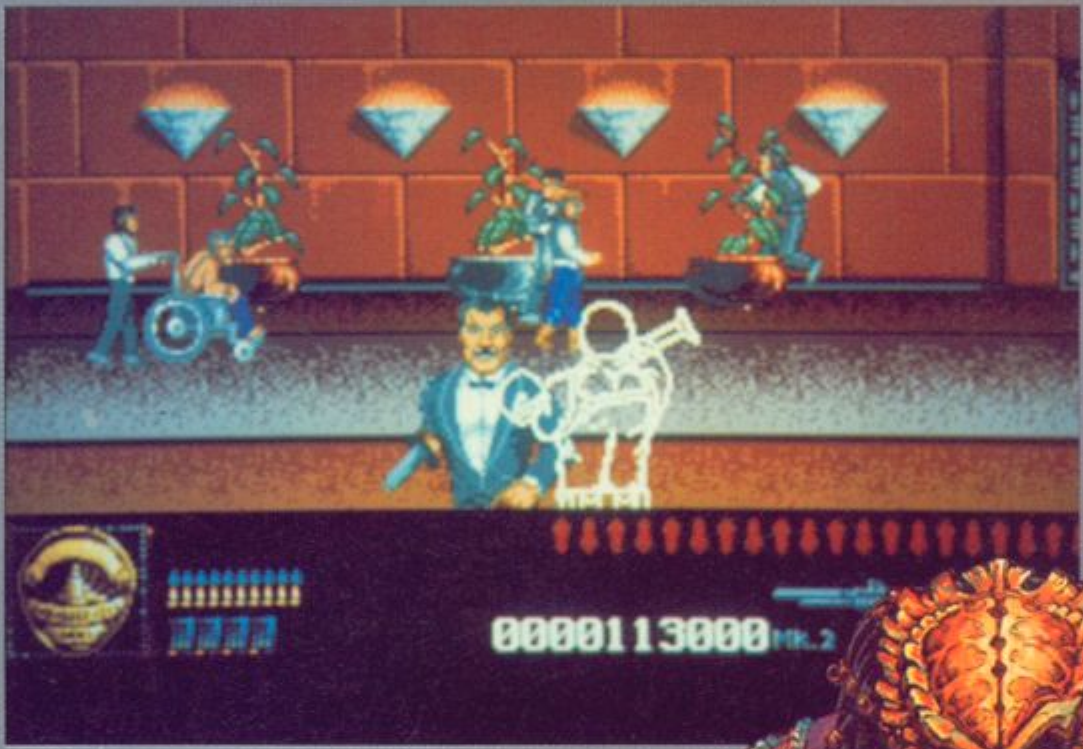
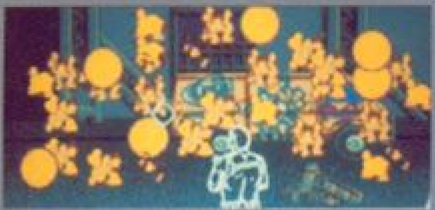
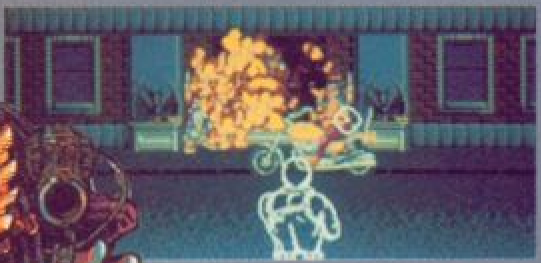
ATARI ST	£24.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£34.99	OUT NOW




The rocket launcher is by far the most powerful weapon pick-up - it's effectively a smart bomb. But it does have one big drawback - it can only be used once...


At the end of each level the scrolling stops and the real trouble starts. Packs of manic baddies stream from the open doorways, firing machine guns, lobbing grenades and firing mortar shells. Can you survive?

Los Angeles 1997 is certainly no city for angels anymore. Colombian and Jamaican drug cults fight each other and the police for domination of the streets. But a new element is about to come in to play, or should that be 'prey'?

Ten years before, the sole survivor of an ill-fated military mission in the South American jungle described his platoon's battle against a bizarre alien hunter that stalked them for sport. The creature, armed with advanced weaponry and a cunning invisibility suit, gruesomely skinned its victims and wore their skulls as trophies.

Now it would appear that humans are 'in season' again...

Imageworks' latest movie tie-in places you in the role of harassed Detective-Lieutenant Mike Harrigan, an officer of the besieged LAPD, who must survive four levels of shoot-'em-up peril.

IMAGEWORKS ask you to slay a little prey-er

PREDATOR 2

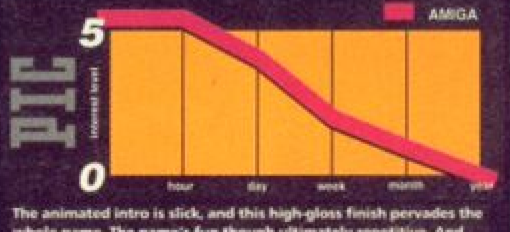
Each level plays like Taito's *Operation Wolf*. The screen slowly scrolls right to left, and gun/knife/grenade-wielding criminals walk, run, roll and even drive on-screen, blasting away at the Harrigan figure at the bottom of the screen, depleting his limited energy. Using the mouse or joystick, you can aim Harrigan's gunsight and try to give some back.

Littering the floor are scores of bullet cartridges which, when shot, magically become part of your ammo reserves. Other even more useful items - faster-firing guns, smart-bomb rockets, energy-restoring flak jackets - can be similarly acquired. Get to the end of the level and there's a super-shoot out between you and hordes of baddies.

This all sounds like a pretty straightforward turkey shoot. But there are complications. Innocent (and very stupid) civilians amble around the screen - shoot too many and you'll be suspended. And then there's the mysterious Predator, visible only by the slight rippling effect of his camouflage suit, who at first is quite content to pick off the rampant druggies but later on, as you home in on its lair, begins to take a more active interest in seeing Harriman hang up his badge - for ever.

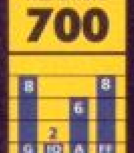
Predator 2 is aesthetically of a very high quality - you'd expect nothing less of coders Arc Developments. There's a superb intro, the game looks great, sounds fine and plays well. But considering what could've been done with such an exciting licence this re-working of an old and now pretty tired idea comes as a real disappointment.

● **David Upchurch**



The animated intro is slick, and this high-gloss finish pervades the whole game. The game's fun though ultimately repetitive. And are four levels, no matter how tough, enough?

ACE RATING
700



AMIGA

The smoothly scrolling background graphics and the nicely animated perps and passers-by impress, although the sluggishness of response when the action really hots up is annoying but inevitable. Sound is suitably explosive, but apart from a sampled alien roar it's nothing special. *Predator 2* contains nothing that Ocean's *Operation Thunderbolt* hasn't done before - and better.

RELEASE DETAILS

AMIGA	£25.99	OUT NOW
ATARI ST	£25.99	OUT NOW
IBM PC	£25.99	OUT NOW

SINGLES COLUMN

Owners of STs with single-sided drives should be warned that they lose the animated intro and - more worryingly - have to send off to Imageworks for a THIRD disc containing the final level data.

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Commodore AMIGA 500
BATMAN PACK

The Commodore A500 Batman Pack must surely rank as one of the most popular computer packs ever! The pack features the **Commodore Amiga 500 computer** with **mouse controller** and **TV modulator**, plus four top software titles. The software includes: **'Batman The Movie'** - Rid Gotham City of the cunning joker, in Ocean's top selling title based on the blockbuster Batman film; **New Zealand Story** - high quality conversion of the leading arcade game; **Interceptor** - Dogfight with two F-16's in this leading flight simulator; **Deluxe Paint II** - top quality Amiga graphics package which set the standard for others to follow. Return the coupon for further details.

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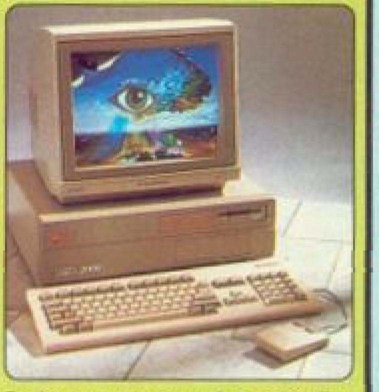

For the more serious or professional applications user, Commodore have a selection of systems based around the expandable Amiga 2000, at prices from £1295+VAT. The A2000 features a full 1Mb RAM (expandable to 9Mb), 9 system expansion slots, plus IBM compatibility with the use of PC-XT or PC-AT bridgeboards. Complete and return the coupon, putting a tick in the A2000 box, for details of A2000 computer systems.

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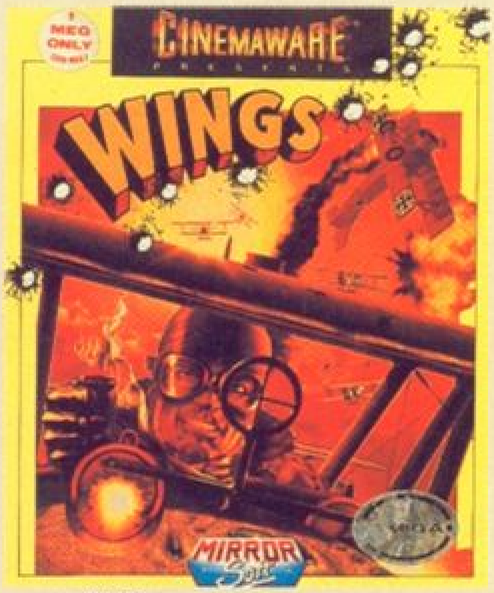
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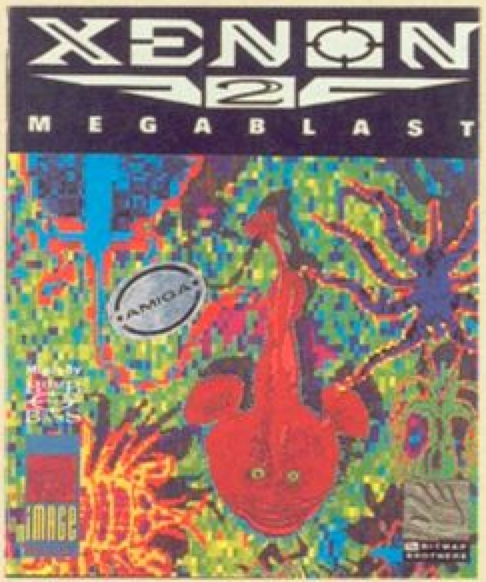
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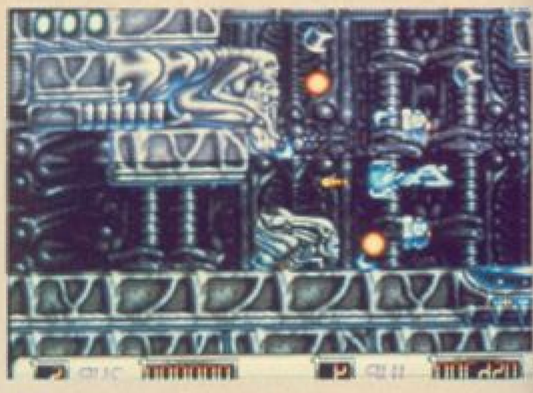
TNT Tricks 'n' Tactics

This month there are hot tips for *Iceman,* sixty codes for *Lemmings,* a *Colditz* playing guide, the complete solution to *Dragon's Lair II,* and lots, lots more...

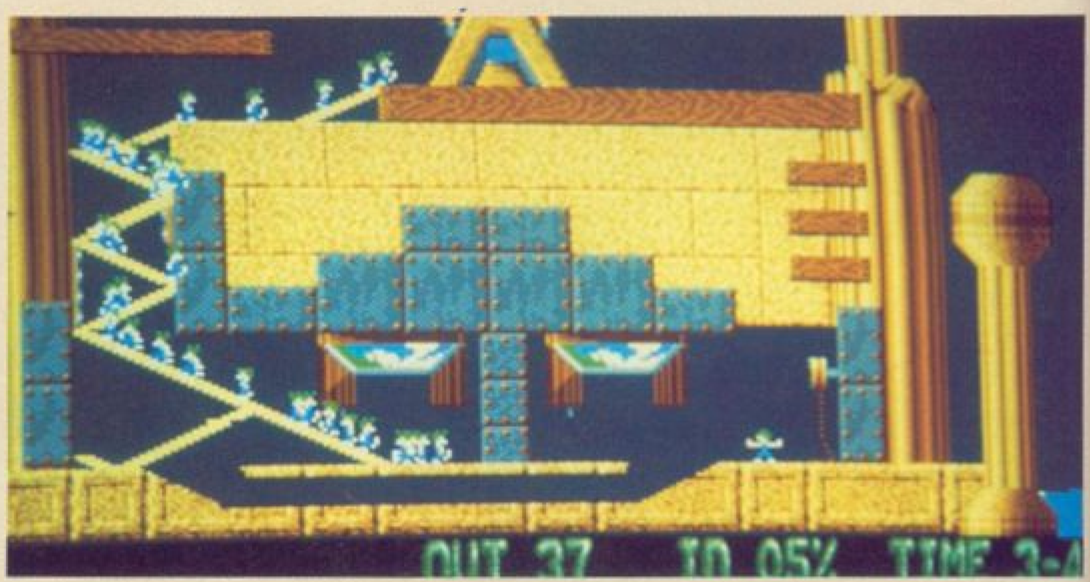


Z-Out

This sweet little shorty for the Amiga comes from Nick Smith from London. Alien bombardment getting you down? Then press J and K simultaneously for infinite energy. Can't get beyond Level 1 (a great pity, because some of the later level are fantastic)? Why, just press J followed by any number from 1 to 6 to skip levels.

Lemmings

Yes, more passcodes for the game featuring those adorable but quite loony little balls of fur, as supplied by Paul Kathro from Romford. Get lemmin'... err... I mean, ge movin'...



T	AXING
2	FIBIJLMOFL
3	IBANLMFPFY
4	BINLMFIQFR
5	FAJHLDHBGT
6	IJHLDHFCGM
7	NHLDHFADGJ
8	HLDHFINEGS
9	LDHFAJLFGL
10	DHFIJLLGGU
11	HFANLLDHGR
12	FINLLDHIGK
13	FAJHMDHJGM
14	IJHMDHFKGV
15	NHMDHFALGS
16	HMDHFINMGL
17	MDHFAJLNGU
18	DHFIJLMOGN
19	LGANLMDPGP
20	FINLMDHQGT
21	FAJHLFHBHW
22	IJHLFHFCHP
23	NHLFHFADHM
24	HLFHFINEHV
25	LFHFAJLFHO
26	FHFIJLLGHX
27	HFANLLFHHU
28	FINLLFHIHN
29	FAJHMFHJHP
30	IJHMFHFKHY

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MAYHEM

2	HMFHFINMHO
3	MFHFAJLNHX
4	FHFIJLMOHQ
5	HFANLMFPHN
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8	IJHLDIFCIP
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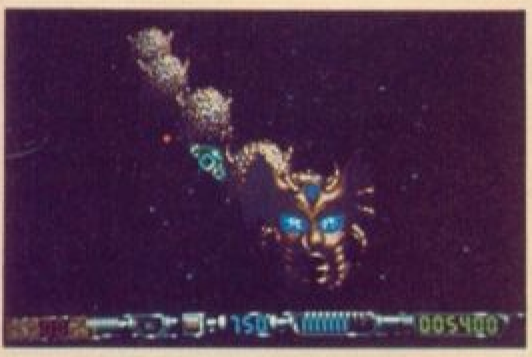
13	IFANLLDHIU
14	FINLLDIIIN
15	FAJHMDIJIP
16	IJHMDIFKIY
17	NHMDIFALIV
18	HMDIFINMIO
19	MDIFAJLNIX
20	DIFIJLMOIQ
21	IFANLMDPIN
22	FINLMDIQIW
23	FAJHLFIBJJ
24	IJHLFIFCJS
25	NHLFIFADJP
26	HLFIFINEJY
27	LFIFAJLFJR
28	FIFIJLLGJK
29	IFANLLFHJX
30	FINLLFIIJQ

TWO-PLAYER LEVELS

2	IJHLDKJCMJ
3	NHLDIJADMU
4	HLDIJINEMN
5	LDIJAJLFMW
6	DIJIJLLGMP
7	IJANLLDHMM
8	JINLLDIIMV
9	AJHMDIJMX
10	IJHMDIJKMQ
11	NHMDIJALMN
12	HMDIJINMMW
13	MDIJAJLNMP
14	DIJIJLMOMY
15	IJANLMDPMV
16	JINLMDIQMO
17	JAJHLFIBNR
18	IJHLFIJCNK
19	NHLFIJADNX
20	HLFIJINENQ

Awesome

Another brief but beautiful cheat from Nick Smith. To obtain infinite lives and shields in this ACE-rated space quest, play until you get to the cargo/energy screen and use the joystick to move the cursor to the top left hand corner on the screen, then press fire on the joystick and the '+' sign on the numeric keypad. What could be simpler?



Xenon 2

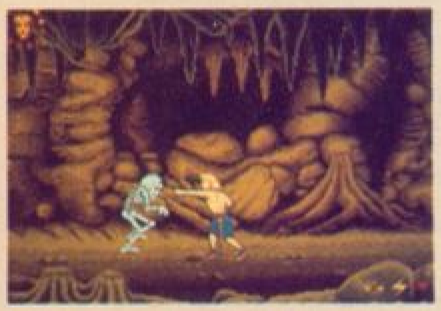
Does the man never rest with his PC cheats? It's Paul once again, this time with a cunning way to get infinite lives in the Bitmap Bros super shoot-'em-up. Simply press F7 after selecting the graphics mode and then during the game press I (the letter 'eye').

Starray

More PC pranks, courtesy of Paul! For infinite lives in this Defender-esque shoot-'em-up, type in MASM 5.1 at the selection screen.

Car-Vup

Another Amiga and ST cheat from Simon (we're very grateful). For a cat-like nine lives type PUSSYCAT on the high-score table. Typing BUMPER during the game gives you temporary invulnerability and typing WHOOPSIE takes you straight to the final level - are you sure you can handle it?



Wrath Of The Demon

Wow! Here's an excellent treat for all fans of this pixel-perfect, astonishingly-atmospheric and deadly-addictive arcade adventure. Simply follow this guide sent in by Joe Baskerville from Frome, Somerset, for complete satisfaction...

At the Dark Tower kill the small bloke who throws things at you and collect the potion. When another one arrives kill him and then his mate so that you end up with three Potions. Once you're in the Tower follow the instructions below to reach and kill the Demon.

Go right and enter the second door on the floor, then enter the first door you come to and collect the Lightning Potion. Go back through the door you just came through, go right, collect the Potion and go through the door. Carry on to the end of the corridor and do the same in the next corridor collecting all the Potions you find on the way.

Now go left, enter the next door you come to, flick the switch and come back out. Go left, go through the next door and collect the Potion. Come out again, go into the next door on your left and flick the switch. Come out, run all the way to the right, flick the switch and enter the door on the floor to your left. Run to the right, go through the next pair of doors, go left, collect the Key and go back past the three doors you just came through.

Run all the way back down the passage and go in the door on the floor right at the start. Jump over the spikes and enter the door. Collect the Key, go back over the spikes and out through the door. Go in the next door on your right again, go right, enter the second door and then go through the closed door. Kill the Goblin and collect the Key. Go back past the pair of doors you just came through, run left and go through the closed door. Run left, go through the first door and the enter the third door.

Kill the Dragon, collect the Key and come out. Run left to the end of the passage, run left again and enter the door. Go through the third door, flick the switch, come back out and go in the closed door on your left. Collect the Potion, come out and enter the last door on the right. Go through the first door, collect the Potion, come out and enter the next door on the right. Go in the first door, collect the Weapon and enter the second door to collect the Potion. Go out, run to the end of the passage and enter the door.

To kill the Demon jump and shoot him. When he looks up dodge the laser beams from above, when he looks down stand in between the hole in the ground to avoid the flames, when he moves his hand duck the fire and when he opens his mouth go to the back of the screen and jump to avoid the flame. Keep shooting the Demon until he's dead.

Police Quest

No-one said it was easy on the streets. Though perhaps James Jack can make life a little more pleasant with the following hint which'll help you get the 'No Bail Warrant' for this mind-bogglingly difficult Sierra adventure.

After you've joined the Narcotica Brigade and your new office has been shown to you by Laura, open the cabinet, find the Hoffman's file and read it. Pick it up again, close the cabinet, get the clipboard and keep turning the pages until you see Hoffman's photo. Type 'Get Wanted Poster' and go to the Court.

Walk right until a man asks you what you want, then type 'THIS IS AN EMERGENCY'. Wait until he comes back, open the door and then give Hoffman's file and the Wanted Poster to the Judge. After typing 'Tattoo' you will get the 'No Bail Warrant'. Now go back to the Police Station and carry on with the game...

Weird Dreams

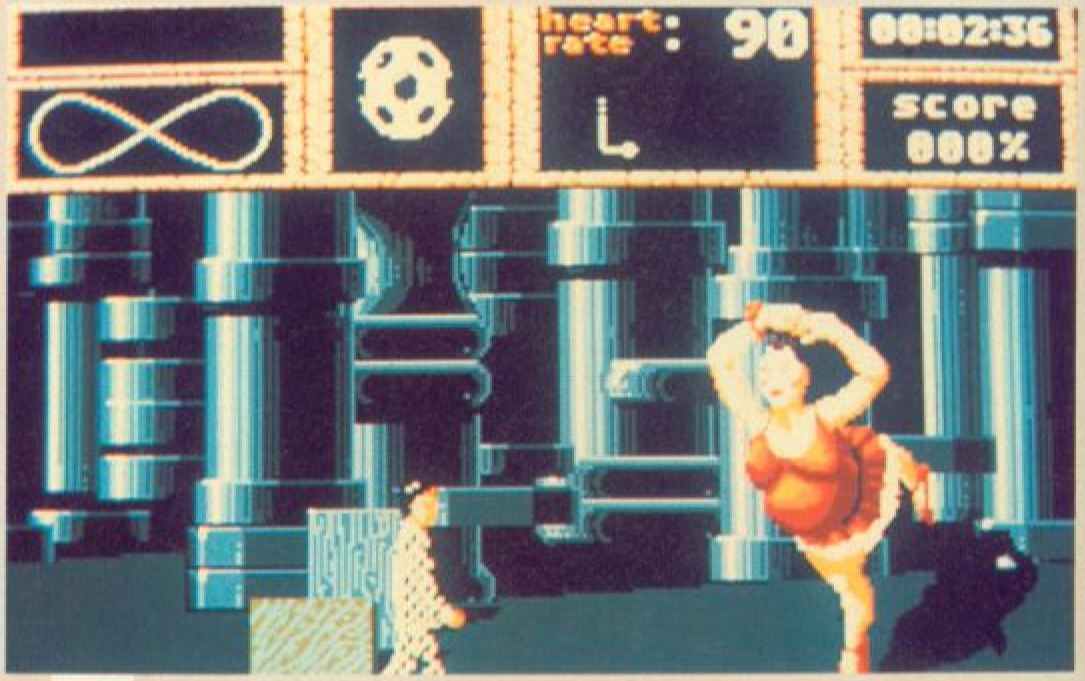
Attention all you business computer players! Paul Greig Smith of Oakley has a red-hot tip for the IBM PC version of this bizarre trek through the dream state.

In the Hall of Mirrors, walk into the right-hand mirror and key in the Morse code for 'SOS' (three short taps, three long taps, three short taps) using the '+' key on the numeric keypad for infinite lives. Additionally, whenever you're in trouble, tap the '+' key a number of times and you will complete the section, except when fighting the Wasp or the Brain.

HI SCORE 2500000
SCORE 77710
TIME 41

Chase HQ 2

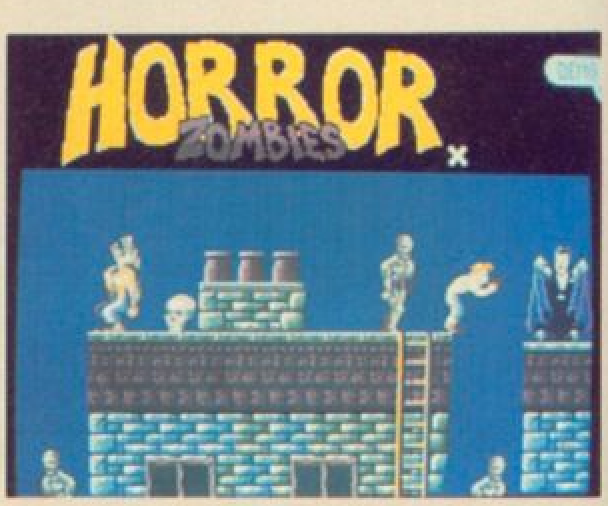
There's nothing more annoying when you're trying to catch a criminal than skidding off the road and ramming straight into a tree. So try out this cheat for the Amiga and ST conversions of the crime-busting coin-op. Hold down H and F5 while the game is loading, and as if by magic you'll find all the roadside obstacles will disappear! If only it could be like that in real life!



Bugs Bunny

It's not funny being a bunny when you can't Level 1 and you've paid lots of money (for the cart). Okay, okay, so I never was very good at poetry. So I'll shut up and let Mike Walpole from Wolverhampton take over with the full list of level codes for this Gameboy cartoon caper.

2	SZWS
3	ZS2S
4	ZZPS
5	SW35
6	SXES
7	ZW4S
8	ZX9S
9	WSRS
10	WZES
11	XSJS
12	XZKS
13	WWMS
14	WXCS
15	XWAS
16	XXOS
17	S2SZ
18	STWZ
19	Z22Z
20	ZTPZ
21	SP3Z
22	SYEZ
23	ZP4Z
24	ZY9Z
25	W2RZ
26	WTFZ
27	X2JZ
28	XTKZ
29	WPMZ
30	WYCZ
31	XPAZ
32	XYOZ
33	ZSSW
34	ZZWW
35	TSZW
36	TZPW
37	2W3W
38	2XEW
39	TW4W
40	TX9W
41	PSRW
42	PZFW
43	YSJW
44	YZKW
45	PWMW
46	PXCW
47	YWAW
48	YXOW
49	ZZSX
50	ZTWX
51	TZZX
52	TTPX
53	2P3X
54	2YEX
55	TP4X
56	TY9X
57	P2RX
58	PTFX
59	Y2JX
60	YTKX
61	PPMX
62	PYCX
63	YPAX
64	YYOX
65	S3S2
66	S1WZ
67	Z3ZZ
68	Z1PZ
69	SE32
70	SHE2
71	ZE42
72	ZH92
73	W3R2
74	W1F2
75	X3J2
76	X1K2
77	WEM2
78	WHC2
79	XEA2
80	XHO2



Horror Zombies From The Crypt

Simon & co again, this time with the level codes to this so-so arcade adventure on the Amiga and ST.

2	WOLFMAN
3	HAMMER
4	LUGOSI
5	NOSFERATU

Wishbringer

Paul Hardy of Sheffield has generously presented us with the complete solution to this classic Infocom adventure, which was recently re-released at budget price. What a bargain! But, before we begin, here are some general tips...

Try not to get caught by the town guards - these are the giant boots stomping around the town which may even arrest you if you're not careful. When you hear the guards approaching, move away and wait a few turns before you continue.

O.K. - now, on with the solution...

The game begins with you standing outside the Post Office. Go IN, WAIT and GET ENVELOPE. You will be told to take the envelope to the Magick Shoppe, so go OUT, and head W,W, YES (when you're asked if you wish to enter the graveyard), N, WAIT, GIVE ENVELOPE TO GRAVEDIGGER, WAIT, IN (to enter the grave), GET BONE, OUT (to leave the grave), S, E, E, E, GIVE BONE TO DOG (to keep it quiet!), N, WAIT, GET NOTE (from the librarian), E, E, E, GET SEAHORSE AND THROW IT INTO SEA, W, W, W, EXAMINE FOUNTAIN (to see a coin and a goldfish within), GET COIN, E, E, N, GET SHELL, LISTEN SHELL (for a clue), N, W, W, W, UP (onto the hilltop).

GET HORSESHOE, N, E, N, N, E, BREAK BRANCH, UP, W, N, UP, E, S, UP (to arrive outside the Magick Shoppe). Now KNOCK ON DOOR, OPEN DOOR, IN, EXAMINE CLOCK, WAIT, GIVE ENVELOPE TO WOMAN (she hands it back to you and asks you to read it), OPEN ENVELOPE, READ LETTER TO WOMAN, WAIT, GET CAN, OPEN CAN, WAIT - now the strange woman will give you details of your quest...

Leaving the shop you must go DOWN, N, W, DOWN, S, E, DOWN, EXAMINE VULTURE, W, GIVE CAN TO TROLL. Opening the can the Troll will shriek in terror and flee allowing you to cross the bridge. So, GET CAN, OPEN GATE, S, S, S, IN (to enter the church), GET CANDLE, OUT, S, EXAMINE FOUNTAIN (there is a token in the fountain, but it is guarded by a vicious Piranha fish!). W, W, EXAMINE PIT, E, E, DROP SHELL AND HORSESHOE (as they are of no further use), N, N, N, N, E, DROP CANDLE AND GET BRANCH, W, S, S, W, UP, OPEN STUMP (on top of the hilltop), N,S, PUT BRANCH INTO PIT, PULL BRANCH (to free the poor creature), DROP BRANCH and then DIG AT X to find a whistle. So, GET WHISTLE and BLOW WHISTLE...

You are teleported across the water; there is a castle here, so go IN, WAIT and GET HAT. Now WAIT and BLOW WHISTLE again - you will travel back across the water and arrive back beside the pit. The magical whistle is lost on the return journey, however!

From the pit go E, E, N, N, N, N, E, GET CANDLE, W, S, S, E, E, GIVE HAT to the pelican, to gain a magic word. Now go W, S and OPEN MAILBOX, GET LEAFLET, WAIT; the mailbox will uproot itself, and follow you everywhere from now on! So, go N, N and LOOK IN CAN to see if it has a false bottom. SQUEEZE CAN and then DROP CAN, GET STONE.

Now head W, S, S, DROP LEAFLET, E, GIVE COIN TO VOSS (to gain a ticket), IN, GIVE TICKET (so you can enter the cinema), EXAMINE CARTON (to see a 3D film advert), N, LOOK UNDER SEAT (to see a pair of 3D glasses) and then GET GLASSES, WEAR GLASSES, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT to gain some useful information.

Leave the cinema by going OUT and then REMOVE GLASSES, OUT. When asked if you really wish to exit, type Y and, once you've left, input E, WAIT, WAIT. The trashcan will come to life and attack you, but the mailbox (which is still following you around) will leap to your defence. Both contraptions will be destroyed. Now go IN (to enter the arcade) and EXAMINE MACHINE, Go OUT and head W, W. Now DROP ALL BUT CANDLE, W, IN, WAIT, WAIT; you will be locked in a prison cell. So MOVE BED, GET ALL, IN (to climb into the hole). You end up in a tunnel, with only your candle for light. Go N, E and PUT BLANKET OVER GRUE (to stop your light waking it up).

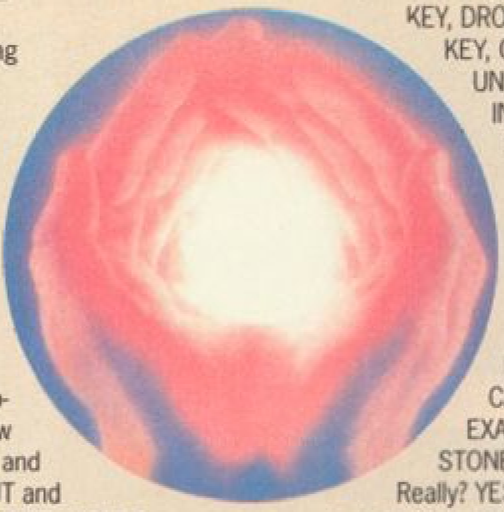
Now OPEN REFRIGERATOR, GET BOTTLE AND WORM, W, W, UP, N, E, S, S, DROP BOTTLE, GET GLASSES AND STONE and GET NOTE. Now PUT WORM INTO FOUNTAIN to keep the piranha happy while you GET TOKEN. Now go E, E, IN (to enter the arcade), INSERT TOKEN INTO SLOT (on the machine), PUSH STICK WEST, AGAIN, PUSH STICK SOUTH, AGAIN, PUSH BUTTON. Are you sure? YES. Really? YES.

Now input the magic word you learned from the pelican to open the drawbridge. Go IN and WAIT; you will be clubbed unconscious. Waking, you find yourself chained to a table which is a part of a machine. Mr Crisp is here. So WAIT, GIVE NOTE TO CRISP, GET COAT AND GET KEY, UNLOCK CHAINS WITH KEY, PULL LEVER, GET NOTE, READ NOTE - it tells you how to pass Alexis the guard dog - and then OPEN HATCH, UP, MOVE PAINTING (to reveal a crank hidden behind), TURN CRANK (to re-open the portcullis).

Don't leave the castle yet, but go UP instead. It is very fuzzy here, so WEAR GLASSES, GET BROOM, EXAMINE PANEL, EXAMINE SECOND SWITCH, PULL SECOND SWITCH, DOWN, REMOVE GLASSES. How go N, OUT, E, ALEXIS HEEL, PAT DOG, OPEN DOOR (into the cottage), E, READ MESSAGE, DROP NOTE, DROP KEY, DROP GLASSES, GET STEEL KEY, OUT, DROP CANDLE, N, UNLOCK DOOR WITH KEY, IN (to enter the library), EXAMINE DESK.

The door will slam shut, leaving you in darkness. Fortunately the Wishbringer Stone you are carrying flares into light. So, input S, BREAK CASE WITH BROOM, EXAMINE SCULPTURE, PUT STONE INTO HOLE. Sure? YES. Really? YES. You are teleported back to just outside the Magick Shoppe entrance, where you may KNOCK ON DOOR and all will be made clear...

THE END!!

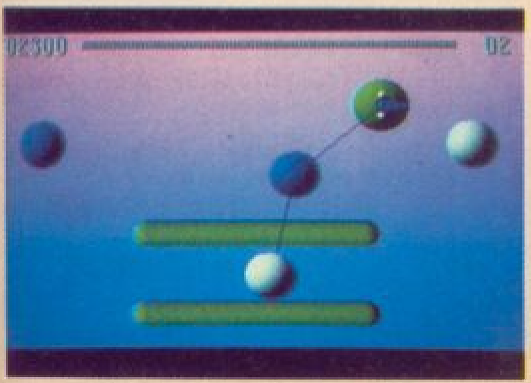


E-Motion

Yeah, you guessed - it's Simon's gang again! This Amiga and ST arcade puzzler certainly had me tearing my hair out in frustration, so type MOONUNIT and press F1 to skip a level level or F2 to skip ten levels.

Monty Python's Flying Circus

It's Simon again, who explains "How to recognise cheats from a long way away". Lesson 1: The Level Cheat. Type your name as SEMPRINI on the high-score table to start on any level you've reached.



Nitro

Simon Dormer and friends from Bexley have certainly been busy - they sent us reams and reams of excellent cheats for the Amiga and ST. This one's for Psygnosis' great little buggy racing game. Getting stuck on a level? Then type in NITRO to jump to the next.

CU AMIGA

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in the PINK

Next month's issue sees the entry of the first multimedia system into our hardware guide: the Commodore CDTV, due for official launch in the UK on 30th April, though supplies may not reach the shops till later. Here you can see Gail Wellington, Commodore's software supremo, programming a CDTV demonstration on an Amiga 3000 at a conference in New York last year. The demo crashed – but we don't expect setbacks like that with the final product, which will be fiercely benchtested in ACE as soon as we get one!

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92 ACE Charts

At last! Someone's won the ACE Charts Jackpot prize! And for those of you who haven't caught on yet, these are the most useful charts in the industry – because they're not based on sales (which can be heavily influenced by licensing and distribution) but on the review marks each game received in ALL the UK games magazines...

95 Hardware Buyer's Guide

Our definitive tech listings and buyer's guide. This month we've printed sections on both 16-bit computers and both 8-bit and 16-bit consoles.

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110 Shopwatch

Dirk Longhorn looks ahead to CDTV, the Game Gear, and wonders about the chances of a colour Game Boy...

105 Direct Line

To YOUR micro. Note that we've concentrated our coverage in this section on Amiga, PC, ST, Megadrive, Game Boy and Lynx. Sorry 8-bitters, but 16-bitters will get an even better deal out of ACE from now on...

111 Hot off the Shelf

Our definitive listing of games that have received top ratings in ACE over the last few months and which should still be available on the shelves.

117 Adventureline

Pat Winstanley with the latest instalment of her column for dedicated adventurers, packed with information on where to find friends and help.

121 The ACE Diary

Our monthly guide to what's on where and what's out when

116 ACE Readers Pages

Now that ACE is concentrating all its energies at the cutting edge of 16-bit, this could be your chance to offload that old 8-bit system...

119 Public Domain

Mark Smiddy's regular guide to the latest in PD gaming.

122 The Blitter End

Our chance to have the last word,

ACE
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ADVANCED COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
CRIME BUSTER!
CDTV
THINK PINK!

ACE has brought you over 40 issues, all packed with info on games technology. If you're missing any back issues – such as this one, which gave you exclusive coverage of the first PC based VR system – then telephone 0858 410510 for availability and order details

ACE CHARTS

The ACE Charts give you the definitive list of top scoring games EVERY MONTH – as reviewed by ALL British games magazines.

A JACKPOT WINNER AT LAST!

Well, it had to happen. As reported last month, Rotherham's Phil Maxfield appears to have cornered the market inthe North by offering his pals copies of his carefully researched system – and now one of the blighters has one the Jackpot! The irony is that it wasn't Phil, but **Andrew Allen** of ...yes...Rotherham, who spotted all five games on the Amstrad CPC. Congratulations Allen – a large box is on its way to you!

In fact, we were delighted to have Andrew win the grand prize, because this is actually the last month in which the Stockmarket and Charts will appear in their present form. As from next month, we'll be presenting a much improved charts section – and rest assured we'll still be giving away some grand prizes.

Other winners in Round 17 were **Daniel Morgan**, **Phil Maxfield** (of course!), **Pete Hall**, **A. Johore**, **J. Barraclough**, **Tariq Anwar**, and **C. Glasson**

What you can win...

You'll get a mystery game worth up to £25 for your machine if you can pick out NEXT MONTH's top chart entries. Get all five right in any category and you'll get £150 worth of software! Entry instructions are opposite.

THE STOCKMARKET

In addition to our games charts, we also have a bit of fun with the figures each month when we produce the ACE Stockmarket. It's a list of the top 25 softcos as determined by the ratings their games are currently receiving. You can see their fortunes rising and falling in each issue...

Having collated all the games reviewed in the latest issues of computer magazines, we calculate the average mark that each publisher received for every one of its games on each format. This is the rating that you see in the second column. So, for example, if the company is great at sourcing 16-bit games but botches up its 8-bit conversions, that will pull down the average mark, even if you can see one of its titles heading up the Amiga, ST or PC charts on these pages. If all the games are excellent, or if the company has just one brilliant program doing the rounds at the moment, it will consequently have a high rating.

The last column shows how well a company's games have fared compared to the Software Index. This single figure represents the average review mark (expressed as a percentage) that all games, all formats, received during the last month. It's a quick guide to how good the current crop of titles is, and each company's Index score shows how well their games compare to the norm. For example, in this month's chart, Core Design's current titles are worth 10 percentage points above average – according to the industry's reviewers.

Although we print only the top 25 companies each month, we keep tabs on all of them. Occasionally a new company will enter the listings (marked with an asterisk). This month, we welcome Demonware to the ACE Stock Market.

Finally, we don't count companies which have only received a single solitary review.

Software index: 76.65

The highest ever! There are some very high quality budget rereleases out at the moment – the likes of Mirror Image's Speedball or Virgin/Mastertronic's Silkworm, for instance. Check next monthto see if this is a genuine upward trend or whether the industry's reviewers have had a collective bout of spring fever.

PUBLISHER	SCORE	+/-	INDEX
System 3	94	n/a	17.35
Spectrum Holobyte	90	n/a	13.35
Microprose	89.88	+24.38	13.23
Mirror Image	89.75	+3.11	13.1
Dynamix	88.33	-1	11.68
Action 16	87	+10.71	10.35
Storm	86.99	+13.32	10.34
Core Design	86.65	+1.15	10
Psygnosis	86.5	+0.87	9.85
US Gold	82.52	+6.51	5.87
Code Masters	82.22	+0.22	5.57
Ocean	82.21	+1.33	5.56
Alternative	82 3	+5.67	5.35
Rainbird	82	-10.67	5.35
Palace	81.75	n/a	5.1
Gremlin	80.94	-3.88	4.29
Image Works	80.48	-6.13	3.83
Electronic Arts	80.47	+17.27	3.82
Elite	80	+12.4	3.35
Rainbow Arts	80	-8.51	3.35
Audiogenic	79.21	+7.58	2.56
Krisalis	78.83	+9.7	2.18
Sierra	77.96	+3.63	1.31
*Demonware	77.5	n/a	0.85
Oxford Softworks	77.5	n/a	0.85

AMIGA

Rocket Ranger	Mirror Image	93.75
Speedball	Mirror Image	91.5
Swiv	Storm	90.67
Railroad Tycoon	Microprose	90.38
Silkworm	16 Blitz	90

Budget re-releases dominate this month as Mirror Image's first two golden oldies get the label off to a fine start.

C64

Silkworm	Mastertronic	94.5
CJ's Elephant Antics	Code Masters	91
Supremacy	Virgin	90.5
Swiv	Storm	88.17
Super Monaco	US Gold	84.5

Bargains to be picked up here as two cheapies head the ratings. Slightly ironic, perhaps, to see a budget version of Silkworm outranking SWIV.

AMSTRAD CPC

Chip's Challenge	US Gold	88.34
Loopz	Audiogenic	86.5
Light Corridor	Infogrames	84
Welltris	Infogrames	81
Xenon	Mastertronic	79.5

Infogrames grab the French flag from Ubi Soft with new conversions. Loopz and Welltris show that puzzles are one of the few genres free from format limitations

IBM PC

Speedball	Mirror Image	95
Red Baron	Dynamix/Sierra	91.83
Life and Death 2	Mindscape	89.95
Links	Accolade	85.5
Jones in the Fast Lane	Sierra	77.34

With Speedball 2 recently earning rave reviews, it's good to see the original can still hold its own with the games of today.

WHAT THE FIGURES ABOVE MEAN...

First, of course, you've got the game. Then the software house and – in the last column – the average score (converted to a percentage with typical ACE precision to two decimal places) the game received in ALL reviews during the last month. Don't forget that the review ratings are taken from all UK magazines, not just ACE, so we don't necessarily agree with some of the judgements here, but all review ratings are, to a certain extent, subjective.

SPECTRUM AND ST CHARTS
OPPOSITE

HOW TO ENTER

STEP ONE

Find a **postcard** – or write your entry on the **back of an envelope.** Enter your name and address, a daytime telephone number if you have one, and the Round Number.

STEP TWO

Tell us your age and which machine you own. Just in case you win!

STEP THREE

Examine this month's charts. Then, using your knowledge of the games scene, try to predict which games will come top of the six machine specific charts. Finally, enter on your postcard:

- the top game for the Spectrum
- the top game for the C64
- the top game for the CPC's
- the top game for the IBM PC
- the top game for the Amiga
- the top game for the ST

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ENTER A SUGGESTION FOR EVERY MACHINE! But remember that your chances of winning may increase if you do.

STEP FOUR (OPTIONAL)

You can also try to predict which company will be at the top of next month's Stockmarket listing (see this page). Enter on the card: '**The top softco will be...**(name of company)'

STEP FIVE (OPTIONAL)

If you want to go for the jackpot £150 prize, then select any of the previous categories and try to predict the top FIVE entries for next month instead of just the top one. Then tell us which category you're predicting for – it can be either the Stockmarket or any of the machine categories in Step Three. REMEMBER – YOU CAN ONLY SUBMIT **ONE** JACKPOT CATEGORY!

STEP SIX

Post the card (WITH a stamp!) to us to arrive not later than the closing date for this round (24th May). The address is:

ACE Stockmarket
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London
EC1R 3AU

The first correct forecast for each category taken out of the hat wins the prize. If you get more than one entry correct, you'll be entered in further draws for each category, thus increasing your chances of winning a prize. And don't forget to include the Round Number!

THIS IS ROUND 19

Each month's competition has a round number so that we can correctly identify entries. You MUST include the round number on your postcard otherwise your entry may not be processed correctly.

THE RULES

- All entries must be received by May 24th 1991.
- No employees of EMAP, or of any company involved in the production, distribution, or sale of ACE Magazine are eligible for entry.
- Only one entry per household. Proof of posting not held as proof of delivery.
- We cannot undertake to deliver specific software titles as prizes, but rest assured that we will make every effort to ensure that the games get the adrenalin pumping!

ATARI ST

Midwinter 2	**Rainbird**	95
Gods	**Bitmap Brothers**	91.75
Killing Cloud	**Image Works**	88.75
Cybercon 3	**US Gold**	88.25
Silkworm	**16 Blitz**	81.25

Midwinter 2 and Gods score almost identically to last month. Silkworm features in four formats in all; this ST rating of 81.25 is its lowest mark in all the top fives.

SPECTRUM

Nightshift	**US Gold**	91
Hero's Quest	**Gremlin**	89.5
Silkworm	**Mastertronic**	89
Lone Wolf	**Audiogenic**	88.5
Xenon	**Mastertronic**	87

Strong Spectrum chart with five new titles all scoring highly. Again, budget titles score highly with Silkworm and Xenon

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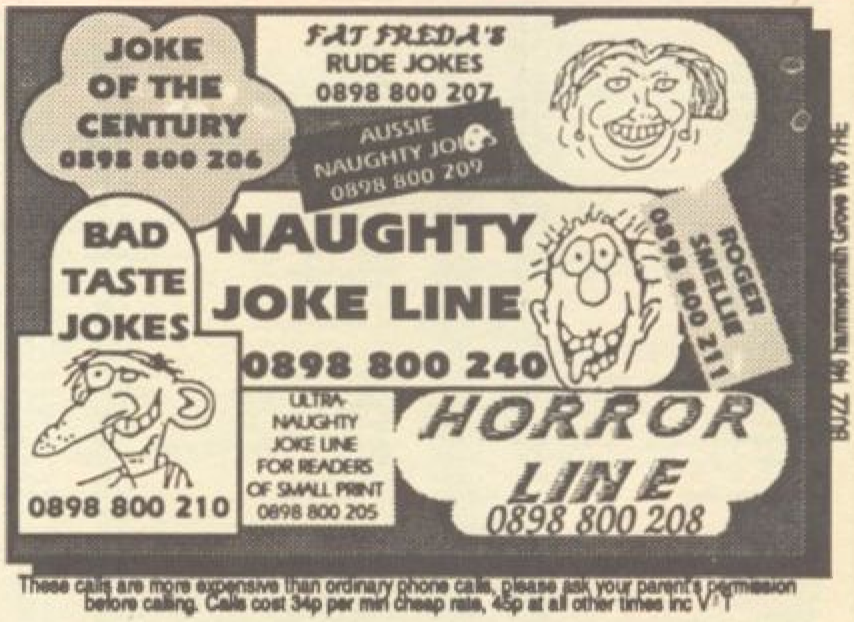

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HARD SELL

Well, well, well! Aren't you lucky? Once again ACE is printing the full hardware specifications for all major consoles and computers. The consoles start here, and turn to page 104 for the computers. All the data have been thoroughly updated to provide you with an at-a-glance guide to all the major machines you'll find on the high street.

Supplier telephone numbers are their own unless PR agencies are available. As a general rule, however, your local dealer should be the first place to start asking questions.

The Star Ratings go from one (poor) to five (excellent). But remember - these should be taken into account along with your own needs and preferences.

AMSTRAD GX4000

Package: GX4000 console, 2 controllers and *Burning Rubber* game.
Processor: 4MHz Z80A
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £99
Contact: Amstrad 0782 566344

IN BRIEF

Amstrad have partly gone up the Commodore path, but have wisely taken the opportunity to upgrade the hardware. The palette is increased, with multitasking hardware scrolling and 16 hardware sprites increasing to 32 with interrupt tricks. Unfortunately the sound chip is the same old tinny one used in the CPCs, albeit in stereo - you can't have everything, I suppose. While some software houses express reservations of the machine being a success outside Europe (and hence reticent about committing support to it), many are working on titles for the machine.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Same as Amstrad CPC.
Palette: 4096
Colours: 32
TV: Yes.
Monitor Output: Yes.
Monitor Supplied: No.
Monitor Options: SCART, Amstrad socket.
Sprites: 16, 32 with hardware interrupts.
Speed: Good for 8-bit technology.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor.
MIDI: No.
Stereo Output: Yes.
Performance: Unimpressive 3 channel chip as on old CPCs, but now runs independently of main processor.

HARDWARE

Joystick: 2 game controllers supplied.
Ports: Monitor/TV ports, stereo headphone socket, 3 joystick ports (2 digital, 1 analogue).

SOFTWARE

Price: Around £25.
Cartridge Memory: 128K
Existing Software Base: Small.but growing fast.
Current Releases: Thirty titles due by January 1991.
Prospects: Very good, with several software houses working on titles.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: One year guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★★
Overall: ★★★★

ATARI LYNX

Package: Lynx with *California Games.*
Processor: 16MHz 6502
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £129.95
Contact: Atari PR 071 388 9871

IN BRIEF

The Lynx was designed by a team including RJ Mical, one of the men behind the Amiga. If that doesn't convince you consider it runs a fast 6502, has 8Mb of game storage on its cards and supports multi-player games. The graphics hardware has built in hardware scrolling and image scaling. Software is a little thin at the moment but bound to increase during 1991.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 102
Palette: 4096
Colours: 16
TV: No
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: Yes - 3.5 inch backlit colour LCD
Monitor Options: None
Sprites: Special graphics hardware effectively treats ALL screen objects as sprites!
Speed: Fast

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Very good
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 4 channel, 5 octave stereo sound has to be heard to be believed.

HARDWARE

Joystick: 4 way joypad.
Ports: Cartridge port; multi-player port; miniature stereo headphone jack.

SOFTWARE

Price: £30-35.
Cartridge Memory: 8Mb
Existing Software Base: Very small.
Current Releases: *California Games* is a great freebie.
Prospects: Uncertain but several new titles in the pipeline.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Very few
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★

ATARI VCS

Package: Both VCS2600 and VCS7800 come with controller and free game.
Processor: 6507 (2600)/6502 (7800)
Console Memory: Not known.
Recommended Retail Price: VCS2600 £39.99; VCS7800 £69.99
Contact: Atari PR 071 388 9871

IN BRIEF

The VCS2600 is a reboxed version of the original Atari console which, until a couple of years ago, remained the best selling home games system of all time. The VCS7800 is a tarted-up version of the VCS2600 with a faster processor, slightly better sound and vastly improved graphics.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 192 x 160 (2600); 320 x 242 (7800)
Palette: 16 (2600)/256 (7800)
Colours: 4 (2600)/16 (7800)
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: No
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: No
Sprites: N/A/64
Speed: Slow

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: No
Performance: Limited to 1 channel on 2600 and two on 7800.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Supplied
Ports: 2 x 9 pin D for joysticks; TV; cartridge port.

SOFTWARE

Price: £7-13.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Small
Current Releases: Rare
Prospects: Unsure in the light of new competition from Japan.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: Worth looking
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

	2600	7800
Graphics:	★	★★
Sound:	★	★★
Expansion:	None	None
Overall:	★	★★

C64 GAMES SYSTEM

Package: C64GS console, controller and 4 games (*Klax, Fiendish Freddy, Flimbo's Quest* and *International Soccer*).
Processor: 1MHz 6502
Console Memory: 64K
Recommended Retail Price: £99.99
Contact: Commodore 0628 770088

IN BRIEF

Take a Commodore C64 computer, remove the keyboard and stick it in an unattractive slab of a box and what have you got? A "new" console! Sales so far have been less than impressive.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 160 x 200 in multicolour mode.
Palette: 16
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB
Sprites: 8
Speed: Slow CPU, helped out by the 64's custom graphics and sound chips.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: No
Performance: 3 channel SAM - one of the best 8-bit sound chips.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Joypad supplied.
Ports: None

SOFTWARE

Price: Around £25.
Cartridge Memory: 4Mbits.
Existing Software Base: Potentially huge, but small at the moment. Commodore anticipate around 100 titles by Xmas.
Current Releases: Plenty forthcoming from various software houses.
Prospects: Uncertain. Do people really want a console version of an ageing, though admittedly good, computer? Software support is likely to be pretty good for a while at least.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None
Maintenance: One year guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★

NINTENDO NES

Package: Standard Pack includes console, plus 2 game controllers and *Super Mario Brothers* game. Mutant Machine pack as above but substitutes *Turtles* game for *Mario*. Action Pack as Standard, but includes Zapper gun and *Duck Hunt* game.
Processor: 6502.
Console Memory: 2K.
Recommended Retail Price: Standard Pack £79.95; Deluxe Pack £99.95.
Contact: Deighton PR 071.836 2973

IN BRIEF

The world's largest selling console, largely because of the playability of some of its games rather than its hardware, which is 8-bit average.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 256 x 240
Palette: 52
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: 64
Speed: Average

SOUND

Speaker Quality: N/A
Stereo Output: No
Performance: Average

HARDWARE

Joystick: 2 dedicated controllers supplied. IR wireless controllers with 30ft range available for £39.95.
Ports: None out of the ordinary.

SOFTWARE

Price: £20-40.
Cartridge Memory: 1 Mb.
Existing Software Base: Over 50 titles available here. Many more available in Japan but these require a converter to run.
Current Releases: Nintendo predict about 2-3 titles per month.
Prospects: In the UK, improving due to increased support – but this is yesterday's technology.
Software Loading: Instant

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: A few.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Faulty machines return to dealer.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★

NINTENDO GAMEBOY

Package: Main unit with *Tetris* game.
Processor: 1MHz customised 8-bit Z80A.
Console Memory: 8K
Recommended Retail Price: £69.99.
Contact: Deighton PR 071 836 2973

IN BRIEF

Nintendo were the first company to produce a dedicated handheld console and now it seems everyone wants to get in on the act. On reflection even the Game Boy was a long time coming since the technology employed by the display is starting to look dated. Not to be dismissed simply because of mono graphics – this machine has some superb titles and games making use of the two-player link-up option are tremendous fun (esp *Tetris*).

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 20 x 18 characters.
Colours: 4 grey shades.
Monitor Supplied: Yes - LCD display is lit by ambient light.
Sprites: 40 8 x 8 pixels.
Speed: Fast for what it is.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on headphones.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: Plays a lot better than it looks.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Built-in 8-way joypad.
Ports: Headphone socket;dual-machine interface.

SOFTWARE

Price: £20-25.
Cartridge Memory: 64K
Existing Software Base: The best for any handheld.
Current Releases: Increasing
Prospects: Excellent

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: None.
Maintenance: One year's warranty

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★★
Expansion: Dual machine interface has lots of potential.
Overall: ★★★★★

NEC PC ENGINE

Package: Console unit, controller and free game
Processor: 7.8 MHz 65C02.
Console Memory: 64K internal, 8K video. (Turbographx: 128K internal, 32K video.)
Recommended Retail Price: N/A (US price around $199)
Contact: Local dealers

IN BRIEF

Sadly, it now seems unlikely that this machine will ever be officially supported by NEC in the UK. Its CD-ROM add-on drive is now the largest selling CD unit on the market and is responsible for much of the recent increase in CD development. There's also a 16-bit version, vastly more powerful, called the Turbographx, but this is only rarely available through importers and at a price – usually around £300. NEC also have a handheld version of the Engine which is software compatible with its larger brother.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 256 x 216
Palette: 512 (Turbographx: 1024)
Colours: 32 - 16 background and 16 shared by sprites.
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: N/A
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: N/A
Sprites: 64 (Turbographx: 128)
Speed: Very fast considering this is an 8-bit!

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 6-channel stereo

HARDWARE

Disk Format: CD ROM at extra cost.
Disk Price: Read-only so N/A
Disk Performance: Superb - the CD ROM adds a new dimension.
Joystick: Supplied with dedicated controller.

SOFTWARE

Price: Around £25-40 imported.
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Large
Current Releases: Increasing.
Prospects: Good.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Grey import.
Second Hand Availability: V Rare
Maintenance: Watch out - grey imported machines rarely have any real warranty.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★
Sound: ★★★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★★

SEGA MASTER

Package: Console using cartridge or smart card plus game controller and *Alex Kidd in Miracle World* game.
Recommended Retail Price: £79.99; £99.95 (+ light gun); £129.95 (+ light gun and 3D glasses).
Processor: Z80.
Console Memory: 32K.
Contact: Virgin Mastertronic 071 727 8070

IN BRIEF

Japanese software base is not as good as Nintendo's but more titles reach UK. Mastertronic have given good support to the machine so the prospects look good. Like the Nintendo, however, this 8-bit machine uses established but dated technology.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 256 x 192
Palette: 64
Colours: 16
TV: Yes
Monitor: No
Sprites: 64

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV.
Performance: 3 channels.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Game controller supplied.

SOFTWARE

Price: £10-40 (typically £25)
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Very good.
Current Releases: Good
Prospects: As good as any 8-bit console.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Some
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Faulty machines return to dealer.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★
Sound: ★★★
Expansion: ★★★
Overall: ★★★

SEGA MEGADRIVE

Package: Console unit, controller, and *Altered Beast* game.
Processor: 8 MHz 68000 + Z80B
Console Memory: 74K main, 64K video.
Recommended Retail Price: £189.99.
Contact: Virgin Mastertronic 071 727 8070

IN BRIEF

Excellent example of the new 16-bit console technologies. The first decent 16-bit console to receive official support in the UK.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 320 x 224
Palette: 512
Colours: 64
TV: Yes
Monitor: No
Sprites: 80
Speed: Very fast

SOUND

Speaker Quality: N/A
MIDI: No

Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 12 channel stereo sound is produced by a custom FM chip and sounds fantastic.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Dedicated controller supplied.

SOFTWARE

Price: £30-50 (typically £35).
Cartridge Memory: Not known.
Existing Software Base: Good
Current Releases: Few in UK at present
Prospects: Very good.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: N/A
Maintenance: One year on UK machines.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★★★
Overall: ★★★★★

SNK NEO-GEO

Package: Console unit, controller unit and memory card (can store 27 games scores).
Processor: 12MHz 68000 + 4MHz Z80A support.
Console Memory: 64K work RAM, 64K video RAM.
Recommended Retail Price: £399
Contact: Active Sales 081 752 0260

IN BRIEF

Technically the most advanced console currently available, the games are of arcade quality, with huge sprites and excellent sound, although the gameplay is a little lacking in the current crop of titles. The game cartridges can store up to 330 Mbits of data, but this is reflected in their price - £199.99! All is not lost, since Active Sales have launched a club where members can rent software for £25 a month. Definitely the system to have if you want to pose, and to be very poor!

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Arcade quality.
Palette: 65536
Colours: 4096
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: 380
Speed: Remarkable

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 13 channel stereo.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Supplied, second available for around £70.
Ports: Walkman socket

SOFTWARE

Price: £200.
Cartridge Memory: 330 Mbits.
Existing Software Base: Small.
Current Releases: 12 planned by the end of the year.
Prospects: Uncertain, but the members' club could help swing chance in its favour.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★
Overall: ★★★★

SUPER FAMICOM

Package: Console unit, controller unit and *Super Marioland*.
Processor: 3.58 MHz 65C816.
Console Memory: Not known
Recommended Retail Price: N/A (Japan price = £100)
Contact: Local dealers

IN BRIEF

Just this time, believe the hype. Although not hugely superior to the Megadrive technically (although the improvements ARE noticeable), it's the games that impress - with *Mario* being one of the best games ever!

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 512 x 512..
Palette: 32,768
Colours: 256
TV: Yes
Monitor Output: Yes
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: RGB, SCART
Sprites: 128.
Speed: Remarkable

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on TV/monitor
MIDI: No
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 8 Channel custom 16-bit PCM/digital.

HARDWARE

Joystick: Supplied.
Ports: One big expansion port.

SOFTWARE

Price: £40-50.
Cartridge Memory: 16 Mb..
Existing Software Base: Small.
Current Releases: Lots, and plenty more planned.
Prospects: How can it fail? Back orders were in the millions before it was launched.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Grey import.
Second Hand Availability: None as yet.
Maintenance: Take care- grey imports are rarely under warranty.

STAR RATINGS

Graphics: ★★★★★
Sound: ★★★★★
Expansion: ★★★★
Overall: ★★★★★

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HARD SELL

PART 2:

The computer section starts here. Read on...

ACORN ARCHIMEDES

Models: Archimedes 310, 3000, 410 420, 440
Package: keyboard, mouse and drive: keyboard mouse and drive plus monitor (colour or mono);
Memory: 3000 512K; 310 1Mb; 410 1Mb; 420 2Mb; 440 4Mb
Processor: Acorn ARM
RRP: Prices range from £789.97 for A3000 alone to £2644.60 for A440 with colour monitor
Contact: Acorn 0223 245200

IN BRIEF

Still the cutting edge of micro technology. Acorn's ARM is about the fastest thing this side of a Cray. This very exciting machine – although gathering admirers since the introduction of the A3000 – still lacks a good games software base and is best left to the enthusiast.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: 320 x 256 or 640 x 256 with normal monitors. 640 x 512 available with multi-sync monitors.
Palette: 4096
Colours: From mono up to 256 (320 x 256) or 16 (640 x 512).
TV: No
Monitor Output: Mono composite video: colour – RGB + sync.
Monitor Supplied: Depends on package bought.
Monitor Options: Acorn dedicated 14 inch medium res. colour; 12 inch high res mono; Multi-sync colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Blistering.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: With extra hardware.
Stereo Output: Yes
Performance: 16 channels (8 stereo pairs); 6 octaves, 1 internal speaker.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 800K
Disk Price: From £1.20 upwards.
Disk Performance: Good and fast.
Keyboard: 103 keys with programmable auto-repeat. Early keyboards have a cheap feel given the quality of the machine.
Joystick/Mouse: 3 button mouse; n support for joysticks.
Interfaces: 25 pin D parallel; 9 piN mouse; 3.5mm stereo headphone jack; 64 way din; 41612 expansion port; IEC 320 video outlet; I/O interface.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Still very limited. Some games available most software is for productivity and business.
Current Releases: See above.
Games: Most famous are *Zarch (Virus)* and *Conqueror*. But there have been several impressive one-off titles released recently.
Graphics: Potential is enormous. Some excellent packages available
Music: Like graphics, but developers remain shy.
Prospects: Limited. Even the cheaper models find it tough competing with STs and Amigas.
Software Loading: Very reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP
Second Hand Availability: Still scarce, some 305 and 310s starting to appear but expect to pay for them.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to faulty machines dealer.
Models: Classic, SE/30, LC, IIsi

APPLE MACINTOSH

Package: Monitor with built-in CPU and disk drive, separate keyboard.
Memory: 1Mb (Classic 1), 2Mb (Classic 2, SE/30, LC & IIsi), 5Mb (IIsi)
Processor: Motorola 68000 (SE/30); 68020 (LC), 68030 (SE/30, IIsi)
Recommended Retail Price: Classic 1 £575; Classic 2 £895; SE/30 £2395+ (inc 40Mb hard disc); LC £1235 (inc 40Mb hard disc); IIsi £2295 (2Mb+ 40Mb hard disc); £2645 (5Mb+40Mb hard disc); £2995 (5Mb+80Mb) (all ex VAT)
Contact: Apple 081-569-1199

IN BRIEF

A very expensive up-market machine for those keen on desktop publishing, WIMP systems and top-of-the-range software. Release of the Classic range an exciting move for wannabe Mac owners. Software is very expensive. Quite a few games in the US, but few over here. Good for MIDI musicians but be prepared to pay through the nose for software.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Classic & SE 512 x 342; LC 640 x 480; IIsi 640 x 480 (colour) & 640 x 870 (grey).
Palette: Classic & SE are black and white; LC 256; IIsi 256 or 16 greys in max res.
Colours: 256 with colour monitor
TV: No
Monitor Output: Integral monitor.
Monitor Supplied: Yes
Monitor Options: Hi-res mono & colour available for LC & IIsi.
Sprites: None
Speed: Classic 1 okay; Classic 2, SE/30 & LC reasonably fast; IIsi very fast.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Good
MIDI: Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: IIsi yes; rest no.
Performance: 4 channels give good performance.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 1.44Mb
Disk Price: £1.50 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Generally fast
Keyboard: Separate with 81 keys including function keys and numeric key pad. Optional extra is the Apple Extended keyboard with 105 keys.
Joystick/Mouse: Joystick is not supported; high-quality single button mouse is supplied with machine.
Interfaces: SE/30 – Apple Desktop Bus connector. 2 RS232/RS422 serial; external disk drive; 96-pin Euro-Din expansion slot; SCSI – DB-25 connector; external audio amplifier. IIsi – 2 RS232/RS422 serial; DB-25 SCSI T.

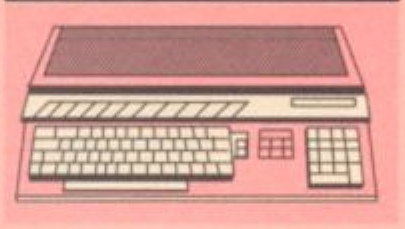
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: A very wide base exists in all fields except games.
Current Releases: Adequate, though largely of US origin and in the business or DTP field.
Games: Very few arcade titles but plenty of icon driven adventures.
Graphics: Lots of interesting software for those interested in DIY publishing.
Music: Very well supported for MIDI software – but it's expensive to boot.
Prospects: As always, excellent – especially in business and DTP.
Software Loading: Quick, reliable.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Generally the RRP – Macs are only sold through dealerships. Ask for a discount for cash.
Second Hand Availability: Scarce and expensive. A better market exists in older models but these are best avoided.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Apple offers Applecare – "insurance" you take out to cover the cost of repairs after the guarantee has run out.

ATARI ST



Models: Atari 520STFM; 520STE; 1040STE; Mega STs; Stacy
Package: 520 and 1040 have keyboard with built-in disk drive; Mega versions have separate keyboard. Power Pack includes 520STE with light gun, joystick and £400 of "free" software. "Discovery" pack includes similar value software to Power pack but with an STFM and an educational bent.
Memory: 520STFM and 520STE 512K; 1040STE 1Mb; Mega ST 1, 2 or 4Mb; Stacy 2 or 4Mb. STE machines expand internally to 4Mb.
Processor: Motorola 68000
Recommended Retail Price: 520STE (Power Pack) £399; 520STFM (Discovery Pack) £299; 1040STE £499; Stacy N/A
Contact: Atari 0753 33344

IN BRIEF

Excellent as a general purpose home machine for games, small business and productivity. It's the number one choice for MIDI musicians. The ST's price still gives it a slight edge over the graphically more advanced Amiga. The new baby ST – Stacy – is tipped by Atari to be the musician's portable since it is a complete 2Mb or 4Mb ST with hard disk and mono monitor in a small box.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: Low-res 320 x 200; medium res 640 x 200; high-res 640 x 400
Palette: STFM 512; STE 4096; Stacy 2
Colours: Black and white in high-res; 4 colours in medium-res; 16 in low-res.
TV: Yes. Not Stacy.
Monitor Output: STFM models only, others through TV modulator
Monitor Supplied: No; Stacy has integral LCD monitor
Monitor Options: Atari monitors SM124 high-res mono; SC1442 med res colour.
Sprites: 1
Speed: Fast
***NB** High resolution display is only available on monochrome monitor;*

medium and low res displays only available on colour monitors or TVs. Blitter fitted to late STFMs (standard on STE) improves the GEM access.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: Yes
Stereo Output: STE only.
Performance: 3 channel sound is average to good depending on software. STE features 8 bit PCM sound but no current software uses it.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5 inch – 720K
Disk Price: £1.20 to £1.50
Disk Performance: Reliable and fast. Early machines were supplied with a single-sided disk drive.
Keyboard: 96 keys including 10 functions keys. Has a cheap feel which can be improved with third party spring kits.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 Joystick ports are standard; 2 button mouse is supplied with machine. Stacy is supplied with a trackball.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Excellent. A few budget titles are starting to appear now.
Current Releases: None of the major software houses ignore the ST so it is well served with plenty of good software.
Games: Across the board.
Graphics: Good with some excellent software to manipulate them.
Music: Excellent. Plenty of sound samplers, editors and MIDI software make this the musician's choice.
Prospects: Very good, but the Amiga is currently the favourite with software houses in the UK and the ST has failed to capture a market in the States.
Software Loading: Several software companies now supply their games on one double-sided disc, often using the second side for extra graphics or sound, meaning single-sided disc owners either miss out on some of the frills, or even worse have to send off for two single-sided discs. The alternative two single-sided discs entail tedious disc swapping - which is equally annoying newer owners.

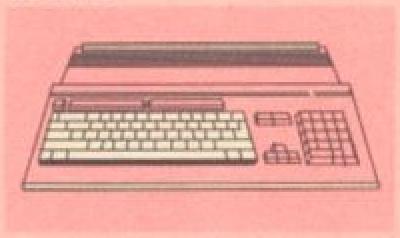
BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: As RRP. Watch out for the twice yearly bundles.
Second Hand Availability: Very common and quite cheap. STs do not hold their value well – beware very old, single sided machines.
Maintenance: One year's guarantee. Return to dealer if faulty.

AMIGA

Models: Amiga A500; A1500; A2000; A3000
Package: A500 has keyboard and built-in drive with separate PSU; A1500 and A2000 have separate keyboard with built-in (fan assisted) PSU. A3000 is a very powerful machine indeed.
Memory: A500 512K; A1500 & A2000 1Mb; A3000
Processor: 500/1500/2000 Motorola 68000; A3000 68030, 16 or 25MHz
Recommended Retail Price: A500 £NA; Screen Gems £399.99; Flight of Fantasy Pack £399.99; Class Of The 90s pack £579.99 (all packs inc A500); A1500 from £999; A2000 from £1199(for 1Mb+20Mb hard disk); A3000 from £3160(for 2Mb+40Mb hard disk). (All prices inc VAT).
Contact: Commodore 0628 770088

IN BRIEF



A stunning specification with custom chips to rival almost everything around, the Amiga is the first choice for the most exigent of games players and video professionals. After an initially shaky start the machine continues to sell extremely well and has overtaken the ST in the UK, though the latter machine still has a slightly larger installed base. The A1500 is near-identical spec-wise to the A2000, but cheaper. The A3000 is a top-end workstation substitute; includes *Workbench 2*, featuring enhanced icons, file handling, and security features plus *Amiga Vision*, a multi-media programming tool. A3000 also comes in three configurations, ranging from a 16MHz/40Mb hard disk to a 25MHz/100Mb disc.

GRAPHICS

Resolution: From 320 x 200 to 640 x 400 (more possible in software)
Palette: 4096
Colours: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64 or 4096
TV: With modulator.
Monitor Output: SCART + composite video in monochrome.
Monitor Supplied: No
Monitor Options: C1084 £349.99
Sprites: 16 in hardware + unlimited BOBS from soft/hardware.
Speed: Very fast with good software.

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Depends on monitor.
MIDI: No. Third party interfaces available.
Stereo Output: 2 phono connectors.
Performance: Among the best around. Custom hardware squeezes 9 octaves of 8-bit digital sound into the four channels.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 3.5inch – 837K; A3000 40/100Mbyte hard disk formatted.
Disk Price: £1.20 – £2.00
Disk Performance: Noisy and sluggish. Third party software is available to improve matters.
Keyboard: 94 keys. 10 function keys and separate cursor cluster.
Joystick/Mouse: 2 button mouse supplied as standard.
Interfaces: Two Joystick/mouse; stereo audio; external disk drive(s); RS232 serial; Centronics parallel printer; SCART RGB/video; composite monochrome video; expansion bus (internal on A1500 & A2000; 32-bit on A3000); clock/memory expansion on A500 only; internal PC expansion on A1500, A2000 and A3000.

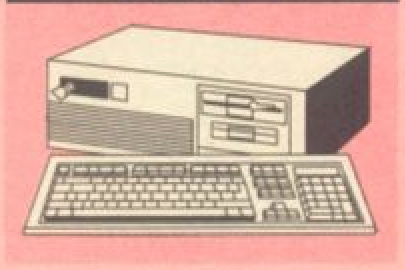
SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Similar to the ST.
Current Releases: Everyone's doing them.
Games: Something for everyone.
Graphics: Quality and range is unsurpassed.
Music: Needs better support for MIDI. Internal sound software is well supported thanks to IFF standards.
Prospects: Excellent.
Software Loading: Noisy but usually reliable. Plagued by viruses.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Old Amiga 1000s can be picked up cheaply enough but these lacked the extra graphics modes of later models. Try to find a good value pack.
Second Hand Availability: Becoming common. Best buys are late Amiga 500s with Kickstart 1.2.
Maintenance: One years guarantee. Return faulty machines to dealers.

IBM PC



Model: IBM's PC was the first PC to be accepted in large quantities (not the first PC) and remains the standard by which all others are judged. There are hundreds of clones and variations including offerings from Amstrad, Atari and Commodore. In general, with PCs you pay for speed and better graphics standards. The extra money is worth it if you can afford it.
Package: Depends on the manufacturer although most are supplied with monitors. They can even be bought in kit form at no extra saving
Memory: Usually 512K or 640K. Can be anything from 64K to 1Mb+. Always go for a 640K model.
Processor: Intel 8088/8086 in base machine is sometimes replaces with the faster NEC V20/30. More expensive machines are based on Intel's much faster 286, 386SX, 386 and even the latest 486.
Recommended Retail Price: Can be picked up for as little as £299 for a "no frills" machine. With top-of-the-range 486 based clones – and the official IBM versions – the sky's the limit. Look for a good EGA or VGA model for between £750 and £1200.

IN BRIEF

Superb value if you want the ultimate all-rounder, the PC still betrays its business origins. Almost every major software house now port their titles to the PC but these remain limited by the constraints of the basic (most common) machines – which means they tend to be limited in sound and graphics. Definitely NOT first choice if entertainment is your preferred use for computers, or if you cannot afford the better EGA or VGA models (which are really essential for good games playing).

GRAPHICS

The first PCs weren't fitted with graphics as standard but most clones incorporate the necessary hardware and come with a monitor. There are three main standards: CGA – a nasty but all to common colour display, EGA about the lowest colour display worth considering, VGA - an Amiga/ST beating display; and Hercules monochrome. EGA or VGA which are usually only fitted as standard to more expensive machines (Amstrad's PC2086 is one exception).
Resolution: CGA 320 x 200; EGA 640 x 350; Hercules 720 x 384; VGA 800 x 600.
Palette: CGA 8 (in two fixed sets); EGA 64; VGA 256
Colours: CGA 4; EGA 16; VGA 64; Hercules 2
Monitor Output: TTL RGB/RGBI (CGA); analogue RGB (E/VGA)
Monitor Options: Vast. Many monitors are dedicated to just one or two modes – some have amber, green or white monochrome displays – check before buying.
Sprites: None
Speed: From very slow - 8088 - to very fast - 80486

SOUND

Speaker Quality: Built-in sound is very poor. Third-party add-on sound boards such Roland (£380) and Ad-Lib (£150) - which is fast becoming a standard - provide synthesiser-quality sound through an amplifier.
MIDI: Third part interfaces available.
Stereo Output: With boards, yes.
Performance: Not the ideal machine for the musically bent – an Atari ST offers more for MIDI, the Amiga more for software sound purists.

HARDWARE

Disk Format: 5.25in –180/360K/1.2Mb; 3.5in 720K/1.44Mb
Disk Price: 60p – £3.00
Disk Performance: Average. Most PC owners also buy hard disks. A large amount of PC applications software refuses to work unless you

have a hard disk.

Keyboard: Almost as many variations as there are clones. Prefer the AT or extended AT layouts to the XT layout since it easier to use.

Joystick/Mouse: Neither supplied as standard. The better clones include a mouse or at least a mouse port, especially since IBM's WIMP system (*Windows*) has become more popular.

SOFTWARE

Existing Software Base: Vast!

Current Releases: All major software houses now produce something for the PC , with many now supporting the superior E/VGA modes.

Games: Most of the best Amiga /ST titles appear on the PC eventually.

Graphics: Given the right graphics adaptor, the PC has nice graphics and the software is usually excellent. On a standard CGA PC the graphics stink no matter how good the software is.

Music: Unexpanded it's pathetic. However, add-on boards offer some of the best sound you'll hear on a home computer.

Prospects: The PC is the eternal champion – as others fall by the wayside it carries on getting faster and better all the time. This is aided by Intel constantly improving the machine's processor and the vast user base demanding better equipment.

Software Loading: Fast and reliable; very fast from hard disk.

BUYLINES

Best Buy Price: Watch out for package deals form large chains and mail order companies. If you don't know too much about PCs go for a name you know.

Second Hand Availability: Common but be careful you do not get a clapped out monitor/keyboard.

Maintenance: Usually one year's guarantee – but competition has forced the price of maintenance contracts down to an affordable level. This often means they fix in-situ free.

CONSOLE + COMPUTER = GOOD?

So, there you have it, the facts in full. Now all you have to do is decide which is the best machine for you. We at ACE reckon that these days, if you can afford it, you really need both a console AND a computer to cover all the bases of Advanced Computer Entertainment.

Our choices? The Sega Megadrive and the Commodore Amiga. The Famicom is a better machine than the Megadrive but it's official unavailability in the UK means that it's a bit of a dark horse at the moment.

But not all of us (any of us?) can afford to fork out the smackeroos for two machines, in which case our recommendation is to plump for the Amiga - it's a great all-rounder with some superb software available for it.

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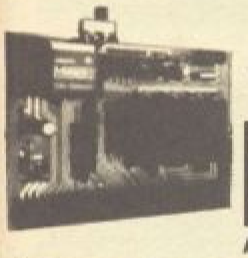

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To YOUR micro...

Monthly machine specific columns for the users of the ten most popular machines, written from a personal viewpoint by other users...

MEGADRIVE

How many games have you bought for your Megadrive recently? And how many have you been pleased with? Three quarters? Half? The odds in the increasingly expensive game of Megadrive Roulette are becoming more and more unattractive. Like the computer market a couple of years ago, for every decent Megadrive game, there's at least one rubbish one.

While companies like Electronic Arts are getting to grips with the 'Drive and learning that games must be handled in a different way on console and computer, games are still appearing (from companies who you would expect to know better) of a discouragingly low standard.

However, perhaps this less that perfect state of affairs will simply force Megadrive owners to be more selective. It's good news for magazine sales, since owners will inevitably be happier to pay £1.80 for an opinion they can rely on when there's a danger of buying a real clinker otherwise.

On the upside, though, 'Drive software is finding itself becoming more varied, and the number of scrolling shoot-em-ups is thankfully on the wane.

The rather unweildily titled ***Lakers versus Caltics and the NBA Playoffs*** is a fine example of just that, being a damned find basketball game.

Featuring eight teams, you can face off any team against any other, and either play against the machine or a friend.

Each team member has an ability of his own, (sounds like a fantasy role playing game, eh?) and their attributes can be displayed while making team selections.

These abilities (all modelled on the real-life performance of the human players) are mirrored in the game itself. A player who has an excellent basket-shooting record is more likely to score from a distance than someone who's not.

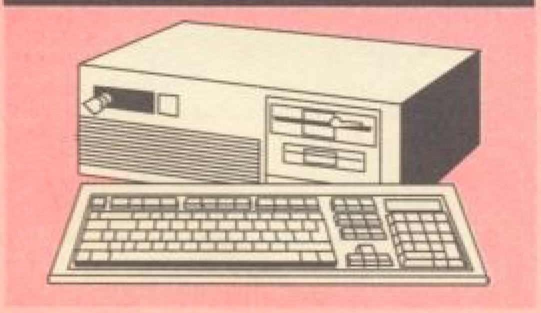
Control over the player works in Kick-Off style. Identified by wearing black shoes instead of white, thr player currently under your control can dribble, pass and shoot the ball upon your command. Getting used to the passing isn't easy, and the joypad makes it a bit tricky, although generally it isn't too fiddly.

The characteristic behaviour of the players even extends to the way they shoot the ball. Some will try to dunk it, others will slam it in, while some may try flamboyant manoeuvres will silly names which rarely work.

LvCatNP offers arcade-quality play and enough in-terms and catchphrases to keep your mates baffled for weeks.

●Richard Evans

IBM PC



Of late multimedia seems to be the subject of talk buzzing around the lips of many PC entertainment software developers. Strip away all the blather and multimedia boils down to an entertainment/ education software system taking full advantage some audio/video techtrickery hooked up to a mass storage device, very usually a CD ROM drive. The reason software developers are getting so excited about is that multimedia software is the sort of thing you can get anybody interested. Not just computer tech heads, not just wide eyed game freaks, any Joe Sixpack or Jenny Sewingmachine that walks into Dixons with a few pennies to spend.

It's all down to the memorytastic amount of information you pack onto CD Rom type optical storage devices. Instead of a couple of nice digitised pictures on the title screen and pixely looking sprites throughout the rest of a game, it's wholly possible to have plenty, literally thousands, of stunning graphics. Instead of a few parpy peeps to make up the games sound, full stereo CD quality samples can accompany anything you do. With the 550MB an average CD-ROM disc can hold there's no problem of jamming everything 5 and a quarter inch floppies.

Best of all, the technologies all available right this moment and at extremely reasonable prices. Intel's recently launched i750 DVI chip set can easily deliver the awesome amount of proccesor grunt needed to create highly complex TV speed animation. Funnily enough it's available as a PC board. CD-ROM's been around for a fair while, mostly used for entertainment and utility software. Tandy has just announced a fully fledged CD-ROM system for just $399 (transatlantic maths translates that to the £230 ballpark). Funnily enough Tandy have sectored the PC market as there major buyer. It all adds up to the PC being the most pragmatic choice for anyone looking for a mess around in multimedia. So if this stuff's all available right now, why aren't we all

THE SOFTWARE

The software to take advantage of these wonderful boxes of tricks has just failed to materialize and the reason why? Standards, or rather lack of them. There's no one standard platform for this type of computer entertainment to be run on. Luckily things are looking up. Microsoft have announced plans to fully support a large number of multimedia graphics and storage devices to be supported in their next release of *Windows*. That should be due in the summer of this year. Also Sony and Nintendo and collaborating on a proposed standard that encompasses multimedia in entertainment computing based around a highly powerful video chip set that could easily appear in the form of a PC plug in board. Micropose are just about to announce a proposed set of guidelines for the standardization of CD-ROM based multimedia software, with the PC at it's centre. Obviously there's a fair bit for the big boys to slug out before a solid standard has been decided upon. But it's happening.

BUT WHAT OF THE GAMES?

But will it mean better games? Certain sitcoms seem to chuck in canned laughter instead of jokes and it's a worry that some publishers games will grow in terms of presentation rather than content. The switch from entertainment software as we know it now to that of the future is very large one and developing the new techniques needed for this type of coding will definitely mean a few stumbled steps. Even so they are steps in the right direction.

COMPETITION!

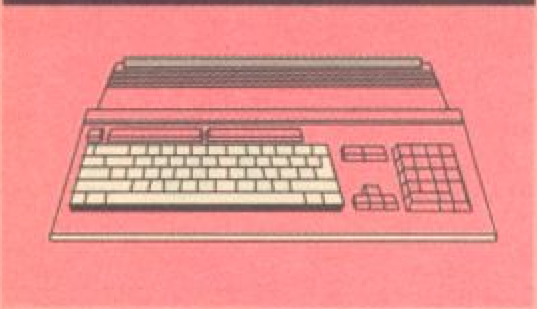
Just room for a final compo to round off with this month. The first entrry out of the hat will receive five pieces of PC software of our choosing.

Send your entries to the normal address.

The question:
What does VGA stand for?
See you next time!

● JENNY TAYLOR

AMIGA



Rumours are abound at the moment regarding a new development on the Amiga hardware front - ie. the likelihood of Amiga cartridge-based games. If the rumours are to be believed, this new medium will offer the games player games that currently span two or more disks on one compact cartridge without the annoying loading breaks associated with disks. If this is true, then games such as Dragon's Lair and its many sequels and 3D epics will have more memory available to them, which will also allow developers to add extra stages or tart up each title's front end and presentation. In addition, the main boom of such a system is that it will effectively kill off the software industry's arch-enemy - piracy.

From what we have heard, Mindscape are already looking into the possibility of the system with their PC epic, Wing Commander, the first lined up for release. Apparently, the Amiga version will span an enormous six disks (such disk use has only ever been necessitated for the Bluth conversions), and bunging it on to cartridge will not only make the game more accessible but probably cheaper, too. One problem is thrown up, though, and that is with licences. As no-one has looked into the feasibility of cartridges before, there may be slight problems in whether companies who own a licence will be covered when they want to slap it on a cartridge as well as on disk. This is certainly a grey area at the moment, and will have to be looked into before any companies spend time, effort and money on releasing cartridge-based film tie-ins and arcade conversions.

Even so, creating a cartridge system could be the next logical step in terms of game design. Imagine a game with graphics similar to those of the Dragon's Lair series, only coupled with the gameplay that those titles lack - if the rumours are to be believed, the cartridges could handle it. In addition, the possibility of current games improved, added to, and even compiled paves the way for more affordable games. With details so sketchy at the moment, don't hold your breath for the system, but even so, this could be the development which extends the Amiga's user base even further and makes it even more affordable.

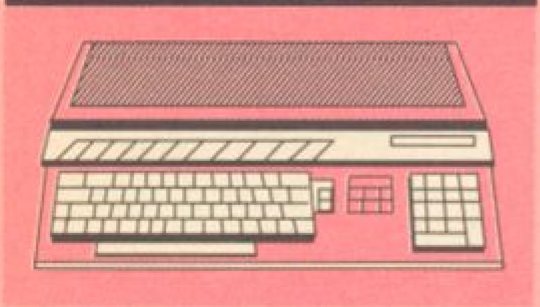
SNOW BROS

Fans of the cute game sub-genre, will be performing cartwheels soon thanks to Ocean and their developing team, Ocean France. OF are currently in the process of converting the little-known Toaplan coin-op, Snow Bros., over to the Amiga, and, from what I have seen, this is going to be one to watch. Basically, Snow Bros's gameplay is akin to that of Taito's classic Bubble Bobble, in so much that the bare bones of the game involves clearing a number of screens of their alien inhabitants. However, where as Bub and Bob were armed with a magic supply of bubbles to do their dirty work, Snow Bros's cute hero - a little snowman - can protect himself with a number of snowballs which, when lobbed at an enemy, cover them in snow and temporarily disable them. By repeating this process, they are eventually turned into snowballs which can then be picked up and rolled across the screen. As the ball gathers speed it careers all over the screen, killing anything in its path, before slamming into a wall and killing its occupant. Each of the platform-laden screens must be cleared within an ever-decreasing time-limit, and success grants the player with access to the next of the fifty screens.

The conversion is as close as we have come to expect from Ocean France who, in the past have been responsible for the brilliant Pang and Cabal conversions, and contains nigh-on everything from the original coin-op. The graphics use the Amiga's entire 32-colour palette, and the speed of the original has been faithfully recreated, rounding off an almost perfect conversion. If cutesy games are your bag, then you are going to love Snow Bros. Actually, whilst we're on the subject of amazingly cute conversions and the Mancurian giants, it seems that Ocean are also going to be producing conversions of the third game in the Bubble Bobble series, which is called something odd like Liquid Kid(!), and Ocean France are currently about to begin work on Hammerin' Harry as soon as their duties on the aforementioned Snow Bros are complete. News is scarce at the moment, but we reckon that Graftgold will be drafted in for the Liquid Kid honours - especially when you their superb Rainbow Islands conversion.

●**Steve Merrett.**

ATARI ST



It's hard to keep up with Microdeal's outpouring of music products for the ST; it seems that you've just finished reviewing one sampler or music arranger when there's another one on the market.

The latest releases are ***Quartet V1.5***, an update of the 4-channel "sample sequencer", and ***Playback,*** a sound output cartridge which gives the ST, STF and STFM the stereo capabilities of the STE.

Quartet V1.5 is a must-have if you lament the ST's musical inferiority when compared to the Amiga. At the normal price of £49.95 it's reasonable, but at the introductory offer price of £24.95 it's unmissable.

Running on any ST without the need for additional hardware, it's very much intended to give the ST the same sort of sample-sequencing abilities as the Amiga, offering four sampled voices (which can be chosen from the 100-sound library provided, or imported from Microdeal's Replay or other popular samplers).

Since the samples are replayed at up to 16Khz, quality is good; you can listen to the sounds through a TV, monitor, or ideally a Replay cartridge. Sample processing software lets you loop, filter or repeat samples before adding them to the 20-voice library which is available for each Quartet composition (these can be saved as Voice Sets).

Quartet's main display has a conventional musical stave on which you can enter notes by selecting their value from a menu box, clicking on the required screen position, and sliding to the correct pitch. This is a tedious and repetitive process, but you can enter notes much faster directly from a MIDI keyboard.

You can test the music for an individual voice or for the whole composition, and once you have the basic composition laid down, you can add to it by inserting voice change messages, loop points (which can be "nested" up to 100 times so you have loops within loops), note links, slides, transpositions and so on.

The results can sound very professional with a little patience, and the package includes routines which allow you to include Quartet compositions in your own programs written in assembler, Basic or C, so Quartet is just as suitable as a development tool as it is for mucking around entertaining yourself!

Version 1.5 allows STE owners to output through the stereo ports simply by pressing F5. Voices 1 and 2 go through the left channel, voices 3 and 4 through the right. For ST, STF and STFM owners, pressing F4 will route output through the Playback stereo cartridge. Å If you already have Quartet V1, you can upgrade to the double-sided V1.5 disk, which includes the new program, more demo music and samples, for £3. If you want to upgrade to the new versions of all three Quartet disks, which again have extra demos and samples on side 2, it will cost £6 - and don't forget to return your original disks to Microdeal.

The other new product, Playback, is an unassuming-looking grey box which plugs into the cartridge port, and has two phono socket outputs which allow you to connect it to an external amplifier. It's compatible with ***Quartet, Replay VIII, Replay Professional*** and ***MasterSound II*** software, adding stereo capability to what were mono samplers. But remember it's not a sampler itself; if you want to digitise your own sounds, you have to have one of Microdeal's other hardware samplers.

Normal price is £29.95, but again there's an introductory offer price of £19.95. Even at this low price you might not think it worth the bother, but the Playback package also includes Drumbeat, a sophisticated 2-channel drum sequencer program which allows "kits" of up to 15 samples to be assembled. Up to 50 drum patterns can be composed and held in memory at once, then assembled into 10 songs, each of up to 99 steps. You can alter timing values and insert triplets, and control tempo internally or from an external MIDI clock, which makes Drumbeat a good alternative to a cheap MIDI drum machine.

In the package you also get a ***Quartet Demo Driver,*** which allows you to combine your own Quartet compositions, graphic displays and scrolling messages (in colour or hi-res mono modes). Lastly, the package includes stereo output drivers written in HiSoft Basic, GFA Basic, STOS and machine code, so you can incorporate stereo sound in your own programs.

Since Microdeal are encouraging ST software developers to make their programs Playback compatible, and public domain libraries are supporting Quartet with additional tunes and samples, it looks as if nothing can stop Microdeal's domination of the ST amateur music market. Well played!

Microdeal, PO Box 68, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4YB,
Tel. 0726 68020.

●**Steve Merret**

PC ENGINE

Welcome to the June column for the PC Engine. This month has seen very little in the line of new Engine games. It seems that all the games suppliers in Hong Kong have slowed down supplying games, etc, for the PC Engine, and are concentrating on the Super Famicom and the Megadrive. This means the UK mail order companies now have to deal directly with the Japanese companies. This means that the latest games will get to our grey shores slightly quicker. It also means that there may be a slight increase in the price.

THE LEGEND OF TOMRA

Back to the new releases. The highlight of the month is the release of *The Legend of Tomra.* In this game you play the heroic Tomra who must recover lost treasures, etc. The game itself is full of platform-type action, with lots of baddies to keep you amused. The graphics are almost arcade perfect, and good sound effects and music are abundance. The only bad point for the game is that the gameplay is a bit repetitive, with the same sort of action all the time. Overall if you liked the arcade game you should love this, but otherwise there are better platform games about for the PC Engine.

TV SPORTS FOOTBALL

This game made an massive impact on the computer scene when it was released several years ago, and now it's out on console. The object is simple: play for, and make strategic decisions for, an American football team. The graphics are the same as the Amiga version, with plenty of speed and color. The game itself takes a bit of getting used to, but soon you'll be throwing touchdown passes, and intercepting practically everything. The game also features intermission screens with cheerleaders and reporters. This is the first conversion of a Cinemaware game onto a console, and if this is anything to go by, I'll be looking forward to the release of *It Came From The Desert*, and *TV Sports Basketball.*

ZERO 4 CHAMP

This month's final release is *Zero 4 Champ*, in which you participate in that dangerous sport of drag racing. You try to progress up the rankings, aiming to beat and then become the champ.

HERE BE PIRATES!

I was surprised to read an article in NCE about forged console games. The pirates apparently target the PC Engine and the Megadrive. I had never seen or even heard of copied PC Engine games, but with a few phone calls to people in the know, I found out that the problem was quite widespread. The copied games first came from the Far East, and were sold to mail order companies as if they were new.

Now pirates here have got the technology to copy the games themselves. Some of the pirated games are of obvious inferior quality (the packaging is often photocopied etc.), but others are so well pirated that it is impossible to tell the difference from the original. Piracy is a serious problem, and drains resources from the companies writing games, possibly sending them out of buisness. Let's hope the law cracks down on these thieves as soon as possible.

TOP OF THE POPS

If you're in doubt as to which games to buy here is my top five which I think deserve your hard earned cash:

● *Bomber Man*: A classic game. The idea is so simple that its surprising nobody thought of it before. You plant bombs with the aim of clearing the screen of the baddies. Great fun in multi player mode. My personal favourite.

● *Formation Football*: I recently rediscovered this at the back of my games collection. The console answer to *Kick Off*, at least until *KO* is released onto the Super Famicom.

● *Parasol Stars*: The continuing saga of Bub and Bob in this CUTE game. Platform action at it's best.

● *TV Sports Football*: Just released, and like *Parasol Stars* will sell out very quickly, both here and Japan.

● *Jackie Chan*: A great action/platform romp, with lots of Kung Fu action.

● Gareth Harper

THE END OF AN ERA...

ACE says a sad goodbye to the PC Engine column for the foreseeable future, but next month welcomes new Super Famicom and Lynx columns into its warm embrace. Sorry to all you Engine-eers out there. If NEC get their act together and officially release the machine in the UK, the column will return.

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GAMEBOY

No mucking about. Let's get going straight away and take a look at a couple of imported games!

DRAGON'S LAIR

Most readers will no doubt be familiar with Readysoft's graphically amazing but totally unplayable *Dragon's Lair*. As a conversion it was perfect - because the original coin-op was totally unplayable as well!

So it was with more than a little concern that I plugged this cart into my Gameboy. Without the superb graphics and sound, would there be anything to hold my attention? So imagine my surprise to find that *Dragon's Lair* is not bad at all.

Mind you, it has to be said that, as conversion's go, the game designers have cheated a bit. The only link left between this cart and the coin-op is the game's name! Gone are the cartoon-like graphics. Instead, the player now has to guide Dirk around a network of platforms, avoiding monsters and meanies and collecting flashing gems (a bit like *Super Mario Land*). Dirk has been reduced to a tiny, almost unrecognisable, sprite, but the scrolling backdrops are superbly drawn. There's quite a bit of gameplay variety - one part of the game even has Dirk riding a speeding minecart like Indy in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

Overall, *Dragon's Lair* is a decent game. The platform action is a little on the fiddly side, due to small size of the sprites, and it's very tough. Unless you have the reaction speed of a rattlesnake, you'd be advised to play the game on easy!

DUCK TALES

Yet more platform antics! It seems games designers think that the Gameboy was built for platform and puzzle games! Never mind, because *Duck Tales* is really pretty good.

You take control of Scrooge McDuck as he waddles and leaps through level after level of scrolling platforms. Various monsters attack and try to make duck soup out of him, so it's lucky that he's armed with a walking cane with which he can knock the baddies away. By jumping and pressing fire Scrooge can cling to the cane and use it as a pogo stick to bounce himself out of trouble.

Along the way there are special objects which, when hit by the cane, disappear to reveal jewels and money - just the sort of thing the avaricious fowl loves!

Duck Tales is the sort of game to wave in the face of colour handheld owners who laugh at the Gameboy's graphic capabilities - it features some gorgeous backgrounds and large well-animated sprites. And while you're gloating, remind those Lynx/Gamegear owners that the Gameboy's batteries last for more than a short car journey - unlike some handhelds I could mention...

But be warned that *Duck Tales* is very tough and sometimes frustrating. Which is a pity, because this game would otherwise be ideally suited to the younger gamers. If you fancy a real challenge, then this is the cart to buy.

TIPS, TIPS, AND MORE TIPS

Mike Walpole from Wolverhampton has sent in a couple of tips for *Tennis* and *W&WX*. So, take it away, Mike.

TENNIS

When serving, press A or B to throw the ball into the air as usual, but instead of hitting it straight away, wait until the ball's too high and press A or B again. Naturally, you'll miss, but you can now move the player so that he's directly under the ball. Let it hit him on the head! You'll find that you've won the point without actually hitting the ball! Do this and you'll win easily.

WIZARDS AND WARRIORS X

Some playing tips:

Level 1-0: Walk left and get the extra life and key.
Level 1-1: Go through the bottom door, get the extra life, then leave the room.
Level 1-2: Get the Invincibility spell using the key from Level 1-1. You should now be in a room with three gems; take them, jump onto the life and jump to the right. Now you should be able to enter two rooms, one with a life and a key.
Level 1-3: Stand at the bottom platform to kill the giant and finish the stage.

● **David Upchurch**

ACE +WORD

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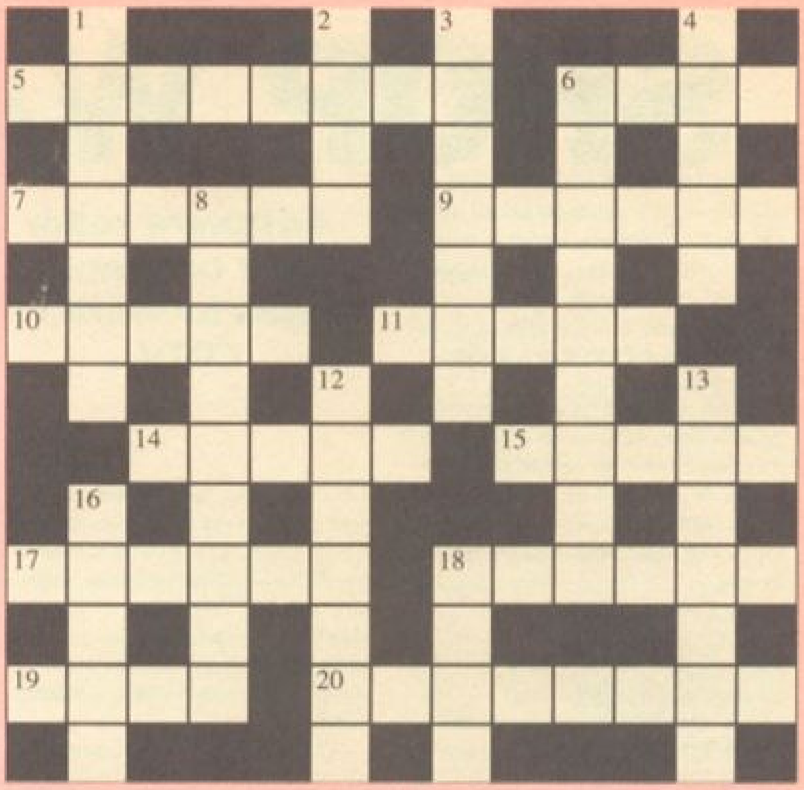
If you're the sender of the first correct crossword solution out of the hat, you'll get a free game for your machine. We regret that we cannot specify exact titles, but we'll do our utmost to ensure that the prizes get your adrenalin pumping. Don't forget to specify your machine format!



CLUES ACROSS

5 Carl is, um, developing Microstyle game (8)
6 Mean to produce new title (4)
7 Original digital computer! (6)
9 Uncivilised game from Firebird (6)
10 Is *Gun Battle* from Lankhor? (1.4)
11 Stop ACE's new edition first (5)
14 A way to destroy art (5)
15 Calling ACE before assessing loss leaders from Ocean
17 *George The First* – young version of Megadrive game (6)
18 Laura's tantrum about game from Sega
19 Cassette player on a ship (4)
20 Pat's line playing Mark Eaton game

CLUES DOWN

1 Zortech's possible origin of the universe (3,4)
2 Top games magazine's cards (4)
3 The RAM's destroyed by pet (7)
4 I'm taking a long time to get the picture (5)
6 Any slaves struggling with new game from Ocean? (4,5)
8 Fling stone at Core Design product (5,4)
12 Trips up! (7)
13 Game Boy in pain (7)
16 Betsy decoded units of data (5)
18 Part played in petroleum manufacturer (4)

HOW TO ENTER

Every month we offer a free game worth up to £25 for your machine if you're the sender of the first correct crossword solution out of the hat. The address to send your solution to is:

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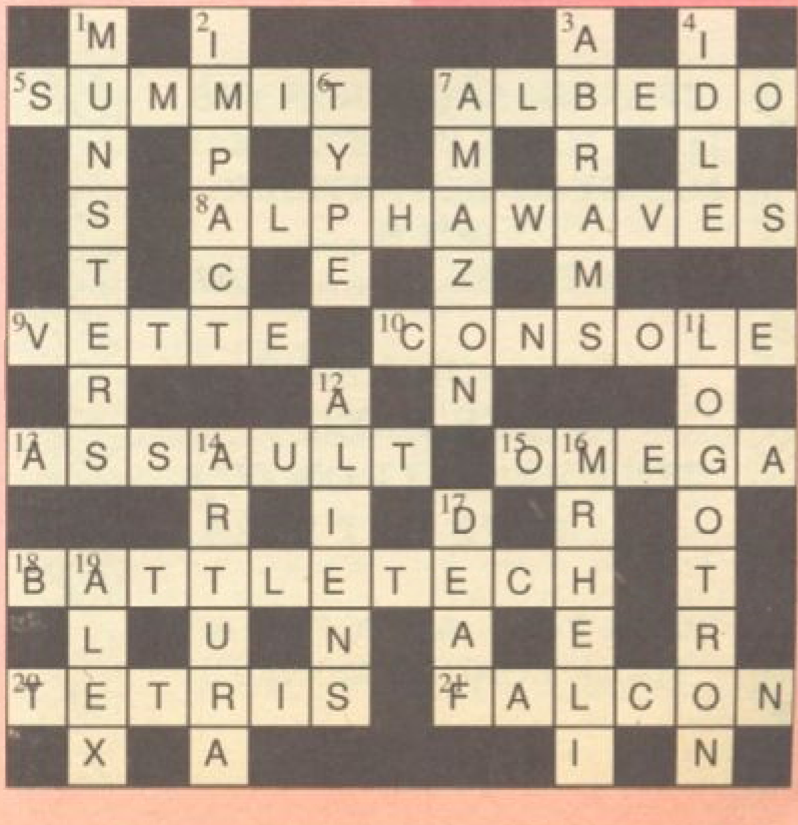
APRIL 91 RESULT

The winner of the April 1991 crossword was Phil Clarke of Chepstow. The prize is on its way, Phil...



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SHOP WATCH

Software seller Dirk Longhorn looks forward to CDTV...

The most frequently asked questions heard in computer retailers over the past few months have covered two subjects:

1. Magic Land Dizzy – when is it going to be available as a stand alone product? and...
2. Commodore's CDTV – when will it be available, how much will it cost, is it an improvement on the Amiga? when will the add-on CD drive be available for the Amiga, and how much will THAT cost? And so on, and so on...

Well, here are the answers.

1. Last month – on 8-bit at least. If your retailer tells you different, then he probably has large stocks of the 'Dizzy' compilation he would like to move first. A 16-bit version is due 'real soon now'...
2. The sumptuous invitations to the CDTV Official Launch have now been received by those key industry figures (in other words, the. ACE editorial staff). The invitations were printed – tacky, tacky – on CD-ROMS and the date is June 30th. It should be available to buy within the next two months. It will retail at £599 and, yes, it will be quite an improvement over a standard Amiga – obviously in the sound department and also in the oft-ignored ease-of-use and friendliness departments. The CDTV is only going to be available in very small numbers initially and only through certain dealers. If your local dealer is going to be a stockist then urge him to hold a demonstration evening because it really is worth seeing.

Commodore have insisted that the price of the CDTV will be static 'at least until Christmas' and that the add-on CD drive for the Amiga should be released before Christmas and will retail at £299. This, if true, will surely ensure the success of the medium. It will be THE add-on that every Amiga owner will demand from Father Christmas and if I were you I'd ask your local dealer NOW to save you one, because demand is sure to outstrip supply once existing owners have seen the enhancements possible with CD.

Speaking of enhancements, those flight-sim enthusiasts with a 386-based VGA PC are in for a real treat within the next few days. F29 Retaliator is being released and will chase away all bad memories of previous incarnations.. The graphic display is so highly detailed it could be a real simulator and if you think you've see smooth fast graphics in a flight sim then you really ought to see this.

Ocean will be providing dealers with demonstration disks so don't feel shy about asking him to demonstrate it for you. If you really want to be sneaky, take along an Amiga-owning friend who has F29 and ask to see it – although it would probably be more fun watching your friend's face!

With the launch of Sega's Game Gear seemingly only minutes away, the hand-held console battle is really hotting up. About time too. With just Lynx and Game Boy there seemed to be an unofficial truce with each machine professing to be aimed at different ends of the market.. Total tosh, of course. There is only one market and it has no ends – people either want a hand-held or they don't. It's in the consumers' interest for there to be savage competition between brands: it keeps retail prices down and improves the rate of software production (witness the increases in Lynx and Game Boy titles over the last few months) which encourages people to buy which stimulates more software and so on...

Some people are holding off from buying to see if there will be a winner in the hand held war, but this seems pretty silly – both the Lynx and Game Boy have their attractions and it seems unlikely that the Game Gear will be any different. Basically, the trade off is between battery life and colour. You pays your money and you takes your choice. Personally, I'd pick the machine that has the first decent version of Scrabble for it.

Incidentally, don't quote me on this, but a little bird told me that Game Boy cartridges are actually produced in colour and just the machine is monochromatic. I don't think the little bird has got it exactly right, but I don't think it's far wrong either. I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions.

ANCO are giving us armchair footballers no peace. Not content with putting out more data disks than you can throw a toilet roll at, there will be KO3 in September and Player Manager II in December. Do these people have no respect for family life??

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HOT OFF THE SHELF

Summer's coming! Which, knowing our weather, will mean either three months of non-stop baking heat or constant torrential rain. Either way, looks like you'll be spending a lot of time indoord escaping from the heat/rain.

What are you going to do with all that free time? Why not play a top game? But what to buy? Just read on, and know that whatever you select from this list will keep you happy into the autumn and well beyond.

AWESOME

Psygnosis ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 (without T-shirt)

A shoot-'em-up where you'll need to master four different gameplay styles if you're to survive. The first is similar to *Asteroids*, except that here your ship stays stationary and the aliens and rocks rotate about you. Next is a *Space Harrier*-like battle against a giant space dragon. After that you pilot your ship over the multi-directional parallax scrolling surface of an alien world, shooting aliens and searching for the landing bay. Finally there's a *Gauntlet*-style run around the starbase looking for the entrance to the space station. The graphics wouldn't look out of place in an arcade. A stunning game, if a little derivative, and well worth its ACE rating.

★ ACE RATING 900 ON AMIGA

BATTLE CHESS 2

Electronic Arts ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £29.99

Sequel-itis spreads from Hollywood to the computer industry! This time round the rules are based on the Chinese variant of Chess, which introduces some new moves, has a river bisecting the board (which some pieces can't cross) and limits the King's movement to an 'Imperial Palace'. As before the board is viewed in 3D, with all the pieces 'taking' each other in a variety of amusing and well-animated ways. While a bit slow and irritating running from floppies due to all the disc swapping , a hard disc shows the game to be far faster and more lethal than normal Chess. A game that should keep even the most jaded Chess fan happy.

★ ACE RATING 895 ON IBM PC

BOULDERDASH

Victor Musical Industries ● Gameboy ¥3400 (Import)

Yet another steal from the C64 catalogue of great games. Hey kids, remember this? Guide cute and cuddly Rockford around umpteen (that's journo-speak for more than can be counted on one hand) mazes of boulders and meanies in pursuit of diamonds. But bear in mind that digging around boulders can make them tumble down on your head! An arcade puzzle game of the most addictive kind and yet another game ideally suited to the B&W handheld wonder.

★ ACE RATING 908 ON GAMEBOY

BRAT

Imageworks ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99

Where *Lemmings* lead the way, others now follow - and why not as long as the games are as good as *Brat*? Little Nathan, the World's naughtiest nappy-wearing nipper, wanders around various vertically-scrolling levels. Unfortunately he's a little stupid, and will happily walk off the edge of cliffs and into traps and monsters - unless you guide him otherwise by placing direction changing icons in his path. Those who are deft with the mouse can guide Nathan into the coins and toys littering the landscape for bonus points. A magic mix of cuteness and craftiness, *Brat* will have you playing into the small hours.

★ ACE RATING 850 ON AMIGA

CHUCK ROCK

Core Design ● Atari ST £24.95 ● Amiga £24.95

Unga-bunga! Poor Chuck Rock's spouse has been kidnapped by the fiendish Gary Gritter and is now held prisoner at the end of five massive levels of platform-pouncing, rock-throwing, belly-butting pandemonium. Graphically, *Chuck* is a real treat, with some hilariously animated dinosaurs and very slick 32-colour arcade-quality parallax scrolling. Although a fairly basic platform game, the varied backdrops, rapid pace, novel atack modes and humourous setting ensures that boredom won't set in.

★ ACE RATING 886 ON AMIGA

FLAMES OF FREEDOM: MIDWINTER 2

Microprose ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● IBM PC £TBA

Now this is a challenge; how do you sum up a huge game like *FoF*? The big thaw has set in, and Midwinter is now Agora, the island HQ of the Atlantic Federation. You play one of their crack agents with the task of scuppering an impending attack by the evil Saharan Empire. The majority of the game takes place in a massive solid-3D world, with your spy able to use any mode of transport he/she may come across, everything from on-foot to helicopter. But this is no shoot-'em-up. There's more than enough strategy and subterfuge to keep any non-arcade fan happy. A major contender for game of the year - already!

★ ACE RATING 950 ON ATARI ST

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Mindscape ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

This violent clash between two solid-polygon generated pugilists is the best rendition of the 'noble art' yet seen on a home computer. The use of polygons allows the action to be viewed from absolutely any angle, and a video playback option allows you to watch that decisive upper-cut again and

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again. Highly realistic, with a huge range of moves and a lot of work to be put in if you're to become World Champ!

★ ACE RATING 900 ON IBM PC

JOHN MADDEN'S FOOTBALL
Electronic Arts ● Megadrive £39.99

What a game! The definitive US footy game yet available on any home system. The graphics are superbly realistic - as is the gameplay - and the excitement is non-stop. The sampled grunts and groans add to the action. If you're a Megadrive owner then you'd be a mug to miss this. Set out for your software shop right now!

★ ACE RATING 904 ON SEGA MD

KILLING CLOUD
Mirrorsoft ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99

San Francisco, 1997. (By the way, have you noticed how many games are set in 1997? Why the bad reputation?) The city has been enveloped by a thick poisonous smog, causing untold chaos and leaving the populace at the mercy of psychotic criminal cults. As one of the last-surviving officers in the SFPD, its your job to try and restore law and order. The game takes the form of missions, where you must try and fly you hover-bike into the city (suitably protected, of course) and try to arrest criminals and so forth. Exciting street-level action depicted in smooth 3D and a highly atmospheric plot combine in a superb game that should please any would-be gang buster.

★ ACE RATING 915 ON AMIGA

LEMMINGS
Psygnosis ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £24.99

In an age of ever-faster vector graphics and smoother parallax scrolls, Psygnosis was the last company expected to release a simple-looking game based on the suicidal tendencies of some cutesy little rodents. The object of the game is beautifully straightforward - you must guide a certain number of randomly-meandering lemmings to safety from one end of a peril-strewn level to the other.. You can endow chosen lemmings with a range of special abilities, such as climb or dig, with which you can get them past traps and obstacles. Incredibly playable and addictive, it's a game that will hopefully encourage programmers to spend as much time on a game's gameplay as its graphics.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON AMIGA

PIPE DREAM
El/Lucasfilm ● Gameboy £25 (Import)

Most readers will probably be more familiar with this game under its original title of *Pipemania*. All the action takes place on a 10 x 7 grid. Using a cursor you have to drop varying sections of piping onto the grid, with the aim of making a pipeline for 'flooz' to flow down. Should the flooz leak before it has passed through a set number of pipe sections then it's game over. Later levels introduce directional pipes (the flooz MUST flow a certain way) and obstacles. Infuriatingly addicitive - it's the sort of game the Gameboy was designed for.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON GAMEBOY

POWERMONGER
Electronic Arts ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99

A new computer classic, with the highest ACE rating ever. You play a warlord, exiled from your homeland along with twenty followers, who has just landed on the shores of 200 islands, ripe for conquering. Unfortunately the current residents are not quite so keen on your enforced leadership, and will do all they can to resist you. Using a similar viewpoint to *Populous*, the landscape is here polygon-based and thus can be manipulated in just about any way you require. The excellent visuals are supported by highly atmospheric sound. All control is by mouse, and couldn't be easier. To play it is to worship it. An absolutely essential buy.

★ ACE RATING 973 ON AMIGA

PRINCE OF PERSIA
Broderbund/Domark ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● IBM PC £24.99

A game that could so easily go unnoticed and unloved by the shelf-scouring hordes looking for the latest licence. The graphics, when static, are fairly unimpressive (although they do get better on the later levels), but when they move... The animation as you guide a young

Prince through umpteen levels of platforms, pits, spikes and swordsmen is quite excellent and life-like. And the gameplay, although it may sound uninspired, is as good as the graphics. Some of the action has a real cliff-hanger aspect to it.

★ ACE RATING 915 ON AMIGA

RISE OF THE DRAGON

Sierra/Dynamix ● PC £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99

An entertaining and graphically superb - if little short-lived - adventure. Set in the gloomy pollution-ridden city of Los Angeles circa 2053, you play private 'tec 'Blade' Hunter. The Mayor's daughter has been killed by some duff narcotics, the cops are chasing their own tails and it's up to you to get to the bottom of the drug-peddling scam. All game interaction is controlled by simple point-and-click, either to use or examine objects in rooms or to select conversation dialogue with other characters from multiple-choice menus. Each location is depicted in superb style, with some very atmospheric graphics. The only *caveat* is that even moderately-accomplished adventurers will find the task a bit easy.

★ ACE RATING 850 ON IBM PC

SAVAGE EMPIRE

Origin/Mindscape ● PC £34.99 ● Amiga £TBA

Using the *Ultima VI* interface, Origin have taken a side-step from the medieval world of their previous games, and now plunge you into a nightmare scenario where you control a party of characters mysteriously transported to a dinosaur-infested Lost World. A good yarn well told and - hard to believe I know - actually *better* than *Ultima VI*.

★ ACE RATING 955 ON IBM PC

SPEEDBALL 2

Mirrorsoft ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £TBA

The sequel to the Bitmap Bros' violent '88 hit. Basically more of the same but with improved graphics, a bigger multi-directional scrolling pitch (festooned with bumpers and ball energisers), extra power-ups and armour to pick up or buy between games, smoother control and a depth-enhancing player-manager element. Highly playable, and the power-ups do have a noticeable affect on the game. The Amiga version, in particular, is superbly atmospheric, mainly thanks to the sample-laden sound effects.. More fun than beating up your kid brother. Better, play this with your brother *then* beat him up

★ ACE RATING 903 ON AMIGA

STRIDER

Sega/Virgin ● Megadrive £39.95

This coin-op conversion was reviewed some time ago on home computer. Thankfully, the Megadrive incarnation is supremely superior - if you didn't know better you'd swear you were playing the arcade machine. Strider Hiryu has to jump and tumble through levels of acrade-perfect action. Stunning for its graphics, sound and gameplay, *Strider* is a must-buy for any Megadrive owner.

★ ACE RATING 919 ON SEGA MD

SUPER MARIOLAND

Nintendo ● Super Famicom (inc. with grey-import console)

Could this be the best platform game available? The game follows the seemingly never-ending adventures of Mario, as he jumps and joy-rides his way through 99 sub-levels of platform action. What makes the game so special - apart from its superlative graphics, stunning sound FX (the echo in the caves has to be heard to be believed) and super-satisfying - is the never-ending variety in the gameplay; it's not all just running and jumping. Complete this and you can consider yourself a real games supremo. The best reason for splashing out on the Famicom is here.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON FAMICOM

SUPER MONACO GP

US Gold ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99 ● PC £TBA

A superb conversion of the coin-op - what else could you expect from the enigmatic but oh-so-talented ZZKJ, the man behind such technically-stunning games as *Super Hang-On* and *Powerdrift*. Everything you want from a racing game is there - a sense of speed (with some *huge* roadside features whizzing by), a throaty roar from the engine, good control

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reponse, tricky courses and intelligently-driving opponents. The only place it falls down in comparison to, say, Gremlin's *Lotus*, is in the lack of courses. But as the review said, *SMGP* is well up with the leaders.

★ ACE RATING 871 ON AMIGA

SWITCHBLADE 2
Gremlin ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99

At last! A game to make the 16-bit console owners realise that they haven't got the monopoly on slick graphics and superb gameplay. Although a sequel, the game bears few similarities to its predecessor. The inspirations from the *Strider* coin-op are obvious: guide Hiro through level after level of baddy-laden mayhem, collecting varied (and wonderfully depicted) power-ups to help in the quest. Admittedly, there's very little here that you haven't seen before, but rarely has it been done so slickly.

★ ACE RATING 900 ON AMIGA

TEAM SUZUKI
Gremlin ● Amiga £24.99 ● Atari ST £24.99 ● PC £24.99

Gremlin go from strength to strength with this marvellous bike game. The action is depicted using amazingly fast 3D polygon graphics, allowing a greater degree of realistic modelling for the bike's performance. Control is is very responsive - perhaps a little too responsive, which can make play frustrating at first. THE bike game for the Amiga - but remember that you'll need to put in a bit of practice to begin with.

★ ACE RATING 900 ON AMIGA

TURRICAN 2
Rainbow Arts ● Atari ST £24.99 ● Amiga £24.99

There are some games that you've got to have, the original *Turrican* was one of them. It proved that, given the right programmers, the Amiga could do anything an arcade machine could do and better. The sequel, though still an excellent game, is perhaps a little to similar - i.e shoot everything - to its predecessor to become a classic in its own right. However, anyone looking to relive that old magic or has yet to discover it afresh can do no wrong forking out £25 for this. The Atari ST version (rated at 898) is especially worthy of mention for its superb graphics, which are nearly on par with the Amiga's.

★ ACE RATING 899 ON AMIGA

WING COMMANDER
Origin/Mindscape ● Amiga £TBA ● PC £34.99

Another 3D space combat game, but radically uses of stunning ray-traced and digitised graphics for the spaceships. They rotate, shrink and grow with amazing speed and fluidity. Animated scenes punctuate the action and present the first true cinematic experience on a home computer. The multitude of missions mean this isn't a game of surface gloss. Sadly only on PC at the moment, and then best appreciated on the high speed models.

★ ACE RATING 949 ON IBM PC

WONDERLAND
Magnetic Scrolls ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £34.99

The Scrolls, having stunned the world with *The Pawn* way back in 1987, return with a new classic. An adventure game based on the famous novel *Alice in Wonderland*, the plot follows the book enough to retain its weird flavour but not so slavishly as to make it solvable by simply knowing the story. The lavish text, teeming with hundreds of tough (but logical) puzzles, is accompanied by a number of stunning animated graphic scenes. All adventure fans kneel and pray - an essential buy.

★ ACE RATING 910 ON IBM PC

WRATH OF THE DEMON
Empire ● Amiga £29.99 ● Atari ST £29.99 ● PC £29.99 ● Macintosh £29.99 ● C64 £TBA

A highly-polished *Shadow of the Beast 2* beater. The plot is yer usual slay-the-demon-and-win-a-princess effort, but the superlative graphics and audio, combined with enjoyable, if ultimately shallow, gameplay. The game is split into 'scenes', each with a different style, i.e. left/right horizontal scroller or *Barbarian*-style hack-'em. This variety helps sustain long;asting interest.

★ ACE RATING 884 ON AMIGA

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Although I have a CPC I am interested in Dragon Computers the help I need is how much it is and if it is compatible with other computers like the CBM 64/128 Spectrum etc.. If you have any information then write to : Majid Saleem, 4 Buckingham Rd, Riverside, Tamworthy, Staffs BB79 7TU

NEEDED! Hints and - Tips/solution to Chaos Strikes Back and Tips on Powermonger please, I have a wealth of tips hints for other games too numerous to mention here. Please write to: Mr PR Booth, 6 Canterbury Ave, Ilford, Essex I31 3NA.

NEED Help with following games on Amiga Guild of Tieves, Rainbow Islands, Turbo Outrun, X-Out, Z-Out, Bubble Bobble, Elite, Powermonger, Nemblos 2 and Spindizzy 2. Send your maps, pokes etc... to Daniel Moore, 133 Cambridge Drive, Ipswich, Suffolk. IP2 9UN.

Calliung all Nintendo owners, help is needed urgently! So, if you are one of the proud owners of Simons Quest please could you help me to get across the large stretch of water, and the large cliff close to the gravyard. If so please write to Christian Anderson, The Old Vicarage, Church End, North, Somercotes, Lincolnshire, LN2 7PZ

Please help Sega Masters. Ultima 4 Where can I find the Shrine of Spirituality? Koopman Noella Palinck. STR42 2100 Deurne Belgium

COMPLETE SOLUTION for Shadow of the Beast 2 needed (061) 643 0647 82 Compton Way, Middleton junction, Manchester M24 2BY. Oh and by the way does anyone know the cheats for Midnight Resistance or Flood? All solutions needed for Amiga versiions Ask for David.

How to win on the ACE Stockmarket. Send SAE to "Phil Maxfield, 40 Brow, Brecks Rotherham. S.Yorks. Success rate 60% +

TOWER of Babel please I am desperate on Group 12 Tower G Excellent game would like to finish it please help.

HELP needed desperately for Warhead (ST). I can't get past the Mission with the black hole at Star "CH-010". Please help me as I haven't got a clue how to complete it and it is really frustrating me. I can give the solution to Mad Professor Mariartic and tips for Midwinter, Interphase, Carrier Command (Action Game) and Battle of Britain. Please write to Jonathon Stane , Ballysase, Curragh, County Klidare, Eire.

ATARI Lynx owners help is at hand. Fed up with no-one reviewing games for the Lynx. Then Send SAE to Andrew Ried 63 Croftney Selby, N.Yorks. Please write and support..

NOTICE!
Unfortunately, due to piracy groups using the Penpals section, ACE have been forced to discontinue this part of the Readers Page. We apologise to genuine advertisers for any inconvenience.
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ADVENTURELINE

Stuck in an adventure? Want to know where to meet adventuring pals? Want to win a free ticket to an exclusive adventurers' convention? Want to know which number to phone for adventure help? It's all here in Pat Winstanley's latest and – sadly – final Adventureline. So what comes next on these Pinkies? Write to us with your suggestions at: Son of Adventureline, Pink Box, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London, EC1R 3AU and stand by for a new section!

NOW HEAR THIS!

Although the Adventureline section is closing down this month, we will still be offering regular information for adventurers within the new section that replaces it. We're looking not only for suggestions as to what you'd like to see in such a section (see above) but also for people to contribute to it. So put those thinking caps on and let us know...

Five years ago two brand new adventuring mothers grabbed every magazine off the newsagent's shelves in the hope of finding something about their hobby. At that time several magazines ran columns but as today, editors limited the space allocated to what was (and is) seen as a minority interest.

Two of the best columns around were by the Pilgrim in AA and Keith Campbell in C&VG, but even these were insufficient to satisfy the cravings of our novice adventurers. Refusing to admit defeat they decided to set up a complete magazine dedicated to the interests of adventurers so that fellow enthusiasts could share information, opinions, hints, solutions and general togetherness. The result was Adventure Probe which this month will see its 60th consecutive issue making it the longest continuously running adventure fanzine around.

Probe started life being typed into a CPC6128 using Tasword with each copy printed out on a long suffering DMP2000 (which is still in use today!). Within a few months it became clear that a photocopier was needed so this was acquired over the objections of one husband and a bank manager. From that point Probe began to reflect the format and presentation it has today, an A5 booklet of some 48 pages crammed with everything that interests adventurers. Probe is still produced on a 6128 but the print quality has improved beyond recognition.

The chronology of Probe runs like this:

June 1986 – first issue (with a cover date of June 1996! – I plead guilty and later editors have retained the mistake for posterity – ouch). The magazine was conceived as a club forum written by and for adventurers of all levels. From the start the emphasis was on home produced software which, although well produced, received little exposure in the mainstream magazines.

November 1986 – Probe and Adventure Contact (Contact was exclusively for adventure writers and lasted around 18 months) split and Sandra Sharkey took full control of Probe.

May 1988 – Mandy Rodrigues took over as editor of Probe and from remote Llandudno, nestling between the Ormes, comes this report:

Mandy saw Probe first on the recommendation of another reader and was immediately enchanted. "Everything an adventurer needs." she said. When Sandra decided that she could no longer handle the work involved, Mandy was asked to take Probe over. Unable to stand the thought of Probe not appearing every month on her doormat she hesitated for a month or two then agreed to shoulder the burden.

Surprisingly Probe is almost identical in format and content now to what it was five years ago. The emphasis is still on homegrown software with reviews by readers rather than the editor. Writers are unpaid as the magazine is not and never has been profit making. Advertising is taken but if a game is slated the review will be published alongside the advert – no holds barred.

Currently the subscription list numbers around 400 and includes adventure columnists on all the major computer mags. In the summer of 1990 around a quarter of the readership gathered in a Birmingham hotel for the first Probe Convention (nice to see a meeting outside London for a change) and were entertained by the sight of Nic Rumsey – all 6' 4" of him – arriving in traditional style with a silk lined velvet cloak, rope wound round shoulder and chest, a long staff and a belt from which dangled a brass lantern and an oversized bunch of keys!

His appearance in the convention room was greeted by stunned silence, promptly followed by fits of appreciative giggles. On retiring to the bar for a drink Nic was served by a speechless barmaid who goggled, went away, then returned a minute later to ask where he had come from. Rather shamefaced Nic admitted "The other room." In fact he had dressed up in the gents at the hotel! Believe it or not, the hotel is allowing the convention again in 1991.

The convention itself was an extension of the friendship circles which have developed over the years by post and telephone through the medium of the magazine. Unlike many other fanzines there has been little in the way of serious bickering between members, the only black spot arising from a subscriber who bought a range of games from different homegrown producers, renamed them and then attempted to market them as his own. He was expelled.

In addition to the annual convention, a couple of local groups have grown from the magazine. One in Wigan meets monthly with up to a dozen readers from a 25 mile radius cramming into a room full of computers to swap gossip, hints, tips, boasts, playtesting, demonstrations of new games and several hours of fun. There is also a group which meets in Cleveland.

The magazine itself can be a little daunting at times to newcomers who may not understand the 'in-jokes'. For instance, Spectrum owners are unlikely to have come across the Grue who takes his name from an enthusiastic appreciation of Infocom games. These tend to contain dark rooms which, if visited without a lamp, result in the intrepid adventurer being eaten by a Grue. Much better than falling over and hitting your head! I can exclusively reveal in this column that the uniform of a Grue is long hair covered by a baseball cap with wild staring eyes attached to it!

But newcomers need not feel left out. All the old hands are more than willing to offer unpatronising help, advice and friendship. Mandy positively encourages contributions from new subscribers, be it a short hint or a full length feature. Since all machines are covered there is plenty of scope.

Among the readership eight and sixteen bit owners are represented almost evenly, with the edge still on eight bit, but many people appear to be upgrading and retaining their existing machines. Since the vast majority of adventure software is for the Spectrum this seems a good move. A quick survey of the advertisments in the current issue offers an Amiga adventure creator, adventure PD for both Amstrad and Spectrum, a disk magazine for ST or Amiga containing maps and solutions, adventures for Spectrum/C64/CPC/ST and Amiga, a second-hand swapshop for the Spectrum, and a couple of fanzines of interest to general computer users.

Overall, if you have an interest in the adventuring scene you would be well advised to buy a couple of copies of Adventure Probe – it could be the beginning of some very satisfying friendships.

FREE TICKETS!!

Any non-subscriber who buys a sample copy of the 5th birthday issue of Adventure Probe (published early June) will automatically be entered into a free draw. Two lucky sample readers will win free tickets to the Probe Convention in Birmingham, October 1991. Probe subscribers have to pay £5 for these tickets and apart from the prizewinners only subscribers can attend so it's a worthwhile prize. To order a sample copy of the birthday issue and have a chance of a free ticket send your cheque/PO by 30th June – £1.50 to ACE/Probe Draw, 67 Lloyd Street, Llandudno, Gwynedd, LL30 2YP.

ADVENTURE SHOP

Do you want some further information or advice about adventures? Then peruse the list below. Here you will find everything from adventure programming to adventure solutions, computer games to telephone games – read on.

GUIDING LIGHT:

Telephone helpline – personal help 12.00am to 12.pm (7 days) 0898- 338933

Inferno telephone adventure – dumped alive in hell! Help! 0898- 442777

Dial-a-Tip – computer moderated adventure help 0898-101234 (All the above lines cost 34p per minute off peak and 45p other times – if you don't pay the phone bill get permission from the person who does!)

ADVENTURE WORKSHOP & ADVENTURE CODER

Fancy writing your own adventure? Then grab a copy of the magazine just for you. Coder is for 8-bit programmers and Workshop for 16-bit. Both cover simple and advanced skills using creators, Basic or machine code and each costs £1.25 for a sample copy from Christopher Hester, 3 West Lane, Baildon, Near Shipley, West Yorks, BD17 5HD.

PUBLIC DOMAIN ADVENTURES

Spectrum: For a range of games at 99p + postage contact Gordon Inglis, 11 West Mayfield, Edinburgh, EH9 1TF.

Amstrad: Homebrew PD wanted and distributed. For information send SEA to Adventure PD, 10 Overton Road, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 9SD.

MAPS & SOLUTIONS ON DISK:

Syntax produce bi-monthly disks for both ST and Amiga containing an average of 10 adventure solutions/maps, 11 reviews and 12 files of hints. Syntax has been established for almost two years now and asks just £3.50 per disk or £20.00 for a year's subscription. (Amiga owners need an external drive). For further details contact Syntax, 9 Warwick Road, Sidcup, Kent, DA14 6LJ.

HOMEGROWN SOFTWARE (PLEASE ENCLOSE SAE WITH ENQUIRIES):

C64/Spec/CPC; Atlas Adventure Software, Address as Adventure Probe above.

ST/C64/Spec; River Adventures, 44 Hyde Place, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent, CT3 3AL.

Spectrum; FSF Adventures, 40 Harvey Gardens, Charlton, London, SE7 8AJ.

Amiga/ST; Jim MacBrayne, 27 Paidmore Crescent, Newton Mearns, Glasgow, G77 5AQ.

Spectrum; Silent Corner, 3 Lonsdale Villas, Wallasey, L45 4PG.

ST/C64/Spec; Interactive Technology, PO Box 146, Sheffield, S13 7TY.

ST/Spec; Zenobi Software, 26 Spotland Tops, Cutgate, Rochdale, Lancs, OL12 7NX.

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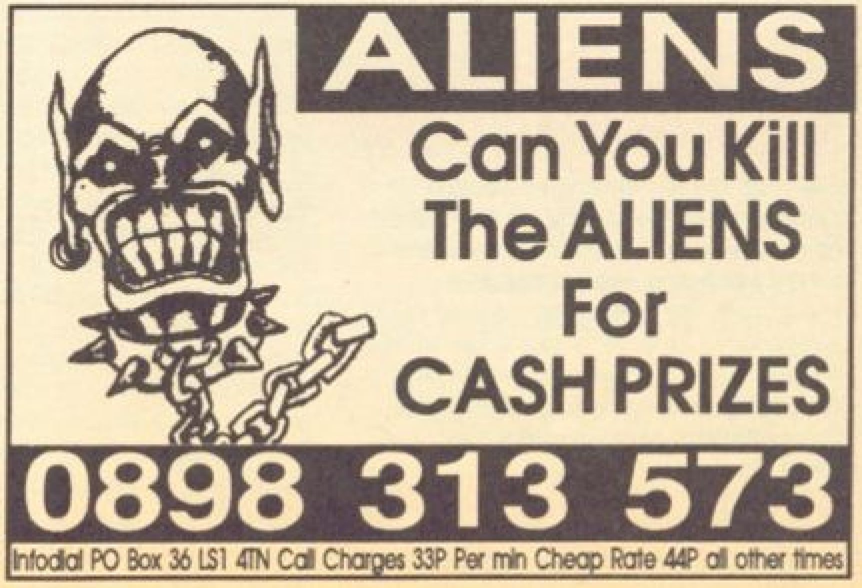

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FREEBIES

Mark Smiddy, looks at some new releases in the wonderful world of PD

Hot news this month is the arrival of the first compiled AMOS game. What makes this a real sizzler is the game has arrived before the compiler! Dogfight 2 is the brainchild of The AMOS Club's Aaron Fothergill with graphics by his brother, Adam. According to AMOS entrepreneur Sandra Sharkey, the game benefits greatly from the compiler because it relies heavily on calculation. "The original version," she commented, "is a bit slow, but the compiled one can really fly..." Was that pun intentional, Sandra?

The game, which has a multitude of options, had only just landed as this issue went to press, so I haven't seen it yet. However, according to Sandra the player can fight up to seven human (two on joystick and six, yes, six on the keyboard) or computer controlled aircraft in a battle for supremacy of the skies. Special bonuses allow for such things as extra weapons and even a cloaking device. A new version allowing multi-computer combat is being worked on, until then you'll need 1Meg RAM, two joysticks and seven friends. Dogfight 2 is Licenceware - a measly £3.50 - order code LPD17.

Other new releases include a new version of Reversi. Reversi 2, the sequel, plays like the original, but the new licenceware version has animated sequences based on themes like, Night and Day, Rain and Shine, and Cars and Buses etc. As the tiles change, an animated sequence fades from one tile to the other. Wild. Also new from the Sparx stable are Jigmania and a parent pleaser, Play It Safe - a home safety program for kids. Finally, on a related topic, the Sandra Sharkey's STOS PD library has now been taken over by Goodman Enterprises.

ACE FREEBIES WORKS!

ACE knows this column actually results in more sales for participating libraries - at least one has had to be rescued from under the deluge of extra mail. So why, we wonder, are all those nice PC people sitting back and saying it's not for us? Come on folks - if you don't hurry your boat will get sunk by the ST and Amiga crowd. Are you really going to suffer that outrage?

GO GETTER

Amiga Mouse £3.50

I have seen the future of AMOS games - his name is Ronnie Simpson. How can you describe a game like this in the few short lines allocated to it? Briefly, it's a 3D isometric board game with super graphics (the title screen is a sci-fi dream) and animation. The idea is very simple - just like High-Low. The computer gives you a number from 0-9 and you have to guess if the next will be higher or lower.

Sounds boring? Not on your nelly - because of all the extra features this is one of the most addictive games I have ever played. Once you start a game it's difficult to leave it alone. Everything about Go-Getter is highly polished - and the only criticism I have is the instructions are on a rainbow background which makes them hard to read. Go Getter can be played with someone else or against the computer - and unlike most computer board games, this one works! Get it.

SHAMELESS PLUG

Thanks to the following:
PC: Advantage Shareware – 0242 224340.
Amiga: AMOS PD Library – 0942 495261.
ST: Goodman PDL – 0782 335650. Budgie UK, 5 Minster Close, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8SF.

4-WAY LYNX

Amiga Joystick £3.50

This is a puzzle game almost certainly inspired by PipeMania (but really nothing like it, honest) and written by Andreas Andreou. The idea is to link a series of tiles together. There are 22 levels in all, each one harder than the last, but the game includes a level creator so you can create your own levels.

This is a queer game with a weird control system that takes a lot of getting used to. In fact, you'll probably have to read the instructions at least twice before you get the hang of it. Once you do, beware, you'll be hooked - I was.

4-Way Lynx has not attracted a lot of attention because of its apparent complexity - first-time users will probably need to be a member of Mensa with a doctorate in neophysics to complete a level without reading the instructions. That should not be taken as a warning to avoid this one, it really is a great, well polished and original game. However, I would urge Sandra to write some more lucid instructions - do that and you're on to a winner.

MONEY SPINNER

ST Mouse £3.00

Personally I find fruit machine simulations about as interesting as watching paint dry and Jim Holmwood's implementation is, sadly, nothing new. There's nothing wrong with the game, the animation is adequate and the graphics interesting if nothing special. The sound is pretty average - although a few spot samples do add a little and the bonus screens are fun. In its favour, at least you cannot lose real money. A fair amount of work has been put into this, but the idea is, frankly, rather tired.

EXODUS

ST Joystick £3.00

Chris Jeffery's strange arcade shoot-em-up is a curious mixture that looks something like a cross between Plutos and Speedball with a pinch of Xenon thrown in for good measure. Quite what's going on in this game is beyond me - but who cares, it's darned good fun. The graphics and sound are well up to par for a budget title, the four-way scrolling landscape and animation smooth an efficient. The idea is not very new, but it's a highly playable mixture which taxes the trigger finger more than your wetware. Another great title from Budgie.

It is with some regrets and many fond memories that I am finally handing the baton of Pink PD to someone else. My thanks and best wishes go to PD and licenceware authors for machines the world over. May all the long nights be worthwhile and your games be great.

PAT WINSTANLEY TAKES OVER!

At a recent computer exhibition, this tame roving reporter was spotted wading through the mists and accosted by some demo writers. 'Why can't we get a mention in your column?' they demanded. 'Because Pat Winstanley's taking it over', I replied fearlessly. 'And how do we get in touch with her?' they cried. 'By writing to Pink PD, ACE, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, LONDON EC1R 3AU. Anything will do – as long as it's an original offering.'

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ACE 06/91

ACE DIARY

MAY 1991

12-18 MAY SOFTWARE RELEASES

Accolade: *Stratego* (ST, Amiga £25.99). Board game in which you must manipulate your pieces to capture your opponent's flag. *Gunboat* (Amiga (£25.99)

Virgin: *Viz* (CPC £9.99 tape, £14.99 disk). Race capers with characters from the infamous comic. *Supremacy* (C64 disk £19.99). Gigantic strategy/trading/action/exploration game set in deep space.

Electronic Zoo: *Galactic Empire* (ST, Amiga £TBA). 3D strategy game. Geisha (ST, Amiga £TBA). Rescue Eva from the clutches of the lustful dragon. Billed as an "adult" game.

Electronic Arts: *Centurion* (Amiga £25.99). Carve out a career for yourself in the Roman Empire. *Powermonger Clue Book* (£5.00). Hints and tips for all formats.

Software Business: *Moto Grand Prix* (PC £25.50). Motor cycle racing game. *Millennium Warriors* (C64 £11.50 tape, £15.50 disk). One-to-one combat for one or two players set against five different historical backdrops.

Domark: *Hydra* (Spectrum, C64, CPC £10.99 tape, £14.99 disk). Tengen coin-op conversion: fight off mercenaries and terrorists to deliver packages around the world.

Sunday 12
Formula One racing: Monaco Grand Prix Bristol Computer Fair, Holiday Inn, Lower Castle St, Bristol. Contact Bryan Walker on (0202) 896610 for details on this one-day show.
Monday 13
Tuesday 14
Independence Day, Paraguay
Wednesday 15
Football : European Cup-Winners' Cup Final
Thursday 16
Anniversary of the Relief of Mafeking, on this day in 1900.
Friday 17
Constitution Day, Norway
Saturday 18
Football: FA Cup Final between Tottenham Hotspur and Notts Forest at Wembley Scottish Cup Final: Dundee United vs Motherwell.

19-25 MAY SOFTWARE RELEASES

Accolade: *Jack Nicklaus Championship Courses vol 5* (Amiga, PC £12.99, Macintosh £15.99). Accessory disk.

Mastertronic/Infocom: *Enchanter* (ST, Amiga, PC £9.99). Rereleased text adventure from Infocom's heyday.

Electronic Zoo: *Ball Game* (ST, Amiga £TBA). Puzzle game.

Software Business: *Living Jigsaws* (ST, Amiga £25.50, PC £30.60). Puzzle game: jigsaws, either traditional or with various templates.

Audiogenic: *Wreckers* (ST, Amiga £24.99). Space-based shoot 'em up.

Innerprise: *Cyberblast* (Amiga £25.50). Two-player arcade style game.

Respray/Domark: *Xybots* (ST, Amiga, PC £7.99). Second chance to buy this shoot 'em up on Domark's budget label. *Trivial Pursuit II* (ST, Amiga, PC £7.99). *Dragon Spirit* (ST, Amiga, PC £7.99).

Sunday 19
Monday 20
Tuesday 21
CD-ROM Europe: 3-day conference and exhibition at Novotel, Hammersmith, London W6. Charles Lindbergh, 25, became the first person to fly non-stop across the Atlantic, from New York to Paris, on this day in 1927.
Wednesday 22
Thursday 23
Cricket: One day international, England vs West Indies
Friday 24
Saturday 25
Independence and Army Day, Jordan Cricket: One day international, England vs West Indies

26 MAY - 1ST JUNE SOFTWARE RELEASES

Accolade: *Jack Nicklaus Unlimited Plot Disk* (Amiga, PC, £TBA).

Virgin: *Sarakon* (ST, Amiga, PC, C64 £TBA)

Electronic Zoo: *Brigade* (Amiga £TBA). Wargame boasting real-time action, digitised sound, user-editable scenarios and accessory disks to come.

Electronic Arts: *Magic Candle II* (PC £29.99). Spells and enchantment in this role-playing game from Mindcraft.

Oxford Softworks: *Chess 2175* PC £TBA)

Audiogenic: *Wreckers* (Spectrum, CPC £10.99 tape, £14.99 disk)

Storm Computers: *Napoleon I* (ST, Amiga £TBA).

Domark: *RBI 2 Baseball* (Spectrum, C64, CPC £10.99 tape, £14.99 disk, ST, Amiga, PC £29.99). Baseball sim featuring 26 teams and complete with 1989 statistics to help your team selection.

Sunday 26
Monday 27
Spring Bank Holiday UK. Cricket: One day international, England vs West Indies Tennis: French Open Championship begins in Paris
Tuesday 28
Wednesday 29
Memorial Day, USA Oak Apple Day: remembered for the flight of Charles II after the battle of Worcester in 1651. He hid in an oak tree to avoid capture. If you feel particularly keen to demonstrate your loyalty to Charles II, wear an oak leaf buttonhole today.
Thursday 30
Friday 31
Republic Day, South Africa

JUNE

Saturday 1
Victory Day, Tunisia 1951: reports that Hillary and Tensing had conquered Mt Everest were confirmed.

2-8 JUNE SOFTWARE RELEASES

Accolade: *Conspiracy* (PC £35.99). Clear name from the murder suspect list; *Stratego* (C64 £TBA). Board game in which you must capture your opponent's flag.

Micro Illusions: *Discovery* (Amiga £25.53). Exploration and alien-fighting aboard a crashed spaceship.

Virgin: *Magnetic Scrolls Collection vol 1* (PC, Archimedes £34.99)

Electronic Arts: *Halls of Montezuma* (ST, Amiga £25.99)

Silmarils/Palace: *Metal Mutant* (ST, Amiga, PC £25.99). Savage beat 'em up.

Sunday 2
Formula One racing: Canadian Grand Prix (Montreal)
Monday 3
Tuesday 4
2nd anniversary of Tiananmen Square massacre
Wednesday 5
The Derby at Epsom
Thursday 6
Cricket: First 5-day test, England vs West IndiesFriday 7
Saturday 8
Horse racing: The Oaks at Epsom
NB Some prices uncertain this month due to VAT increase.

THE BLITTER END

A GOLDEN AGE?

Super Mario World on the Famicom is an awesome creation. If ever anyone doubted whether games could aspire to art, they ought to spend a few hours (which will probably become a few weeks) with this title. You can read more about it in this issue, but SMW really deserves an entire magazine to itself. As far as Blitter's concerned, this game is evidence that video entertainment has finally *arrived.*

We have to credit the Japanese with starting the journey. It's true that they have vast R&D budgets to work with, but throwing money at game design doesn't necessarily produce a good game, and SMW is an all-time classic. And it's the most recent of a long line of tremendous game concepts – the original Super Mario was superb and Donkey Kong, in which Mario first appeared, was a stroke of genius.

There are also lots of Japanese games that we very rarely see over here and which deserve far greater recognition – something they'll get, hopefully, now that Japanese console hardware is becoming more widespread. How many readers, for example, remember Mappy? This horribly addictive platform game topped the Japanese charts for months and featured a ludicrously original scenario in which a cat bounces between platforms using trampolines. Superb. And then there was Bokosuka Wars, which featured a unique control system for manipulating hundreds of on-screen soldiers. You moved the general, and everyone followed. Select other leaders, and their various squadrons followed. Select a single warrior and he fights alone. The game was a frantic rush over a blocky landscape, but none the less gripping for all that...

Things are going to get even better when we get a more global console market. Us Westerners are pretty mean at games design as well, but the directions we move in tend to be very different. Of course, there was Nebulus, a very Oriental-style success (though not in sales terms), but for the most part our laurels rest on simulation-inspired efforts like Sid Meier's Railroad Tycoon and Ultima VI. We've also been more successful than the Japanese at integrating new graphic presentation styles – look at Populous, for example – with more complex gameplay.

Together with the proliferation of optical disk technology, the next two years look like being a golden age for gamesters. Even in the short term we've got some stonkers to look forward to. Sid Meier's Civilisation, for example, threatens to do for mankind what Railroad Tycoon did for chuff-chuffs. If Sid doesn't bite off more than he can chew, this could turn out be a classic.

David Braben's been quiet for a while now, but you could be reading news of this in ACE very soon, with a launch planned for Spring 1992. Ultima VII, due out this autumn, will combine Ultima depth of play with Wing Commander graphics – help!

And there's more. The proliferation of hand-helds offers gaming possibilities that haven't even begun to be exploited. Imagine a Game Boy version of D&D, played by four players simultaneously using the four player link up. Teamsters could sit round in a circle and explore the dungeons separately or together, each with real-time control of his own character. Hot stuff! And what about the Sony Data Diskman – when the graphic models come out, you can expect some mind-blowing titles on that. Even CDI is threatening to go portable...

No doubt about it, there's never been a better time to get into gaming. Blitter used to sit back in the old armchair and reminisce about PacMan, but not any more...

*

And as if to prepare themselves for the Golden Age, software impresarios have been playing musical chairs, jockeying for positions that will carry them into the '90s. Their movements can teach us a few lessons. Erstwhile Activision boss Rod Cousens has gone to Acclaim, so *he's* obviously in no doubt about Nintendo's future in Europe. Microprose UK boss Peter Jones has abandoned 'Prose to join narrative software giants Sierra – and don't believe everybody who says the Broderbund deal isn't going to happen. Finally, Andrew Hewson has managed to move from a company with lots and lots of debts to one with...hey presto!...no debts at all!

Blit Blit!

YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT!

Remember our exclusive report on Vince Tyrell and the ARSE VR system? We never thought that some readers might take us at our word, but... First, we received a telephone call from a foreign gentleman who wished to '...offer Tyrell financial backing'. 'But it was all a joke,' we protested. Stunned silence at the other end, followed by 'Oh..er..I see...Ha ha' and a dialling tone. And the letters! Our favourite was the one from an outraged reader who said that we'd been '...conned by Mr Tyrell'. Oh surely not...

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

The next issue of ACE hits the streets on June 8th – and it's going to be a corker. For the first time, ACE goes RIGHT ROUND THE WORLD! We'll be bringing you details of games culture from Finland to Tierra Del Fuego, from Bombay to Brindisi. Don't miss it!

PLUS:

- **ACE Conferences get on the road again. See page 39 of this issue if you want to participate.**
- **News of a major entertainment event later this year, sponsored by ACE.**
- **A trip round another world, created by the new Dimension Superscape system.**
- **All the latest games titles tried, tested, and tortured...plus much, much more!**

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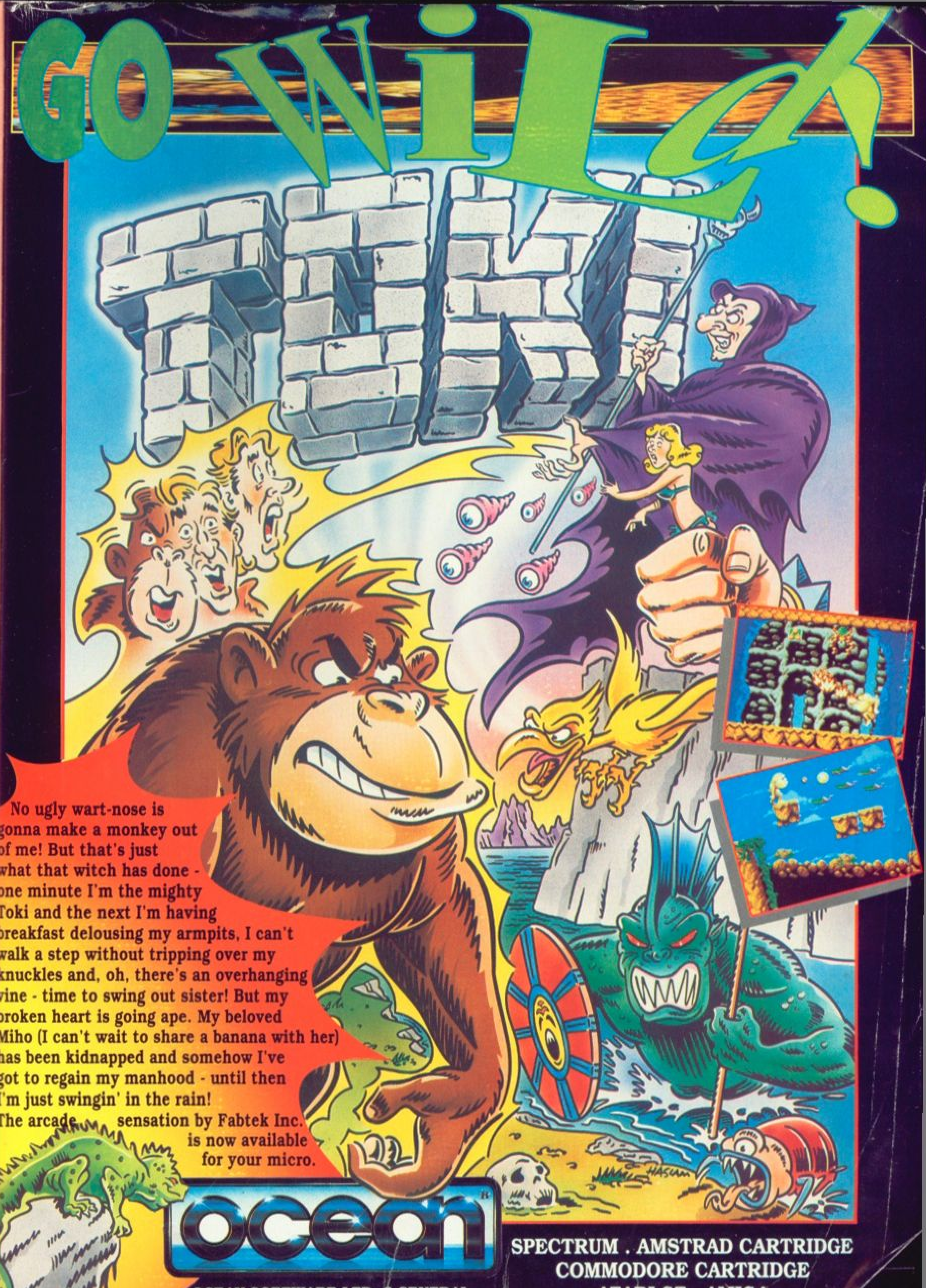

No ugly wart-nose is gonna make a monkey out of me! But that's just what that witch has done - one minute I'm the mighty Toki and the next I'm having breakfast delousing my armpits, I can't walk a step without tripping over my knuckles and, oh, there's an overhanging vine - time to swing out sister! But my broken heart is going ape. My beloved Miho (I can't wait to share a banana with her) has been kidnapped and somehow I've got to regain my manhood - until then I'm just swingin' in the rain!
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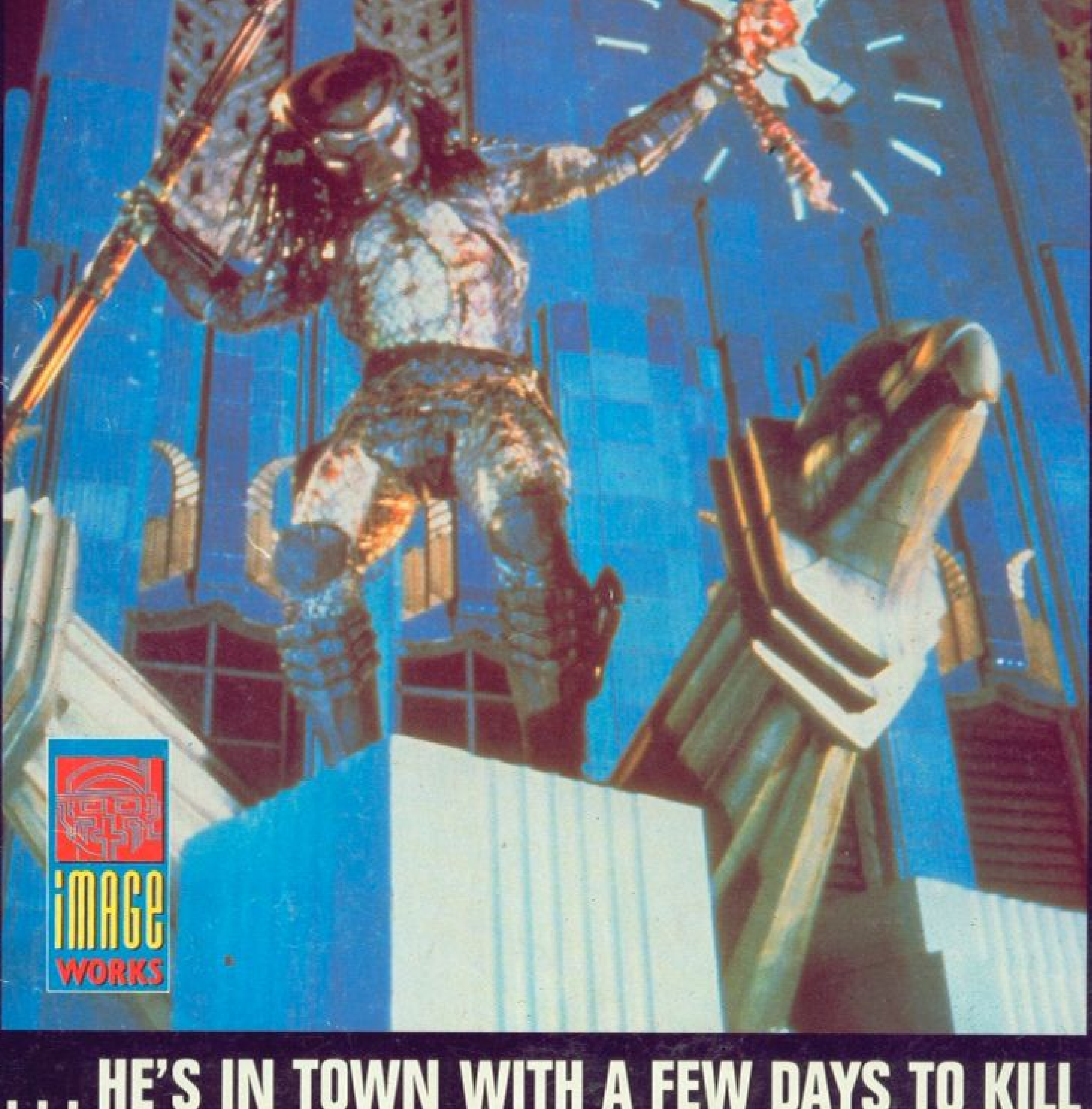

... HE'S IN TOWN WITH A FEW DAYS TO KILL

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